United Nations A/63/PV.10

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Thursday, 25 September 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Win (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mori: I am honoured by this opportunity to address the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. This great institution plays a vital role in the development process of its members and remains the global organization best situated to address the world's pressing needs and to help find solutions for them. So, it is with pleasure that I use this occasion to make the following remarks on a few challenging issues of vital significance confronting Micronesia today.

I must first congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the Assembly. He has my delegation's admiration and full support. In the same vein, I commend the dedication and stewardship of Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the Assembly at its sixty-second session.

I wish to offer my greetings to our able Secretary-General and to express the best wishes of my Government as he continues to lead the Organization through the difficult challenges ahead.

The General Assembly is meeting at a time of unusual uncertainties surrounding the global economy. The world financial situation and the double threat posed by the fuel and food crises impose additional strain on all of us and negatively impact our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and our pursuit of sustainable development. The security of our island countries remains under threat by the effects of climate change.

The fuel crisis is a major challenge to the Members of this Organization. There are few countries in this world that are left unscathed by the worldwide fuel crises. Too often, I am afraid, those most affected by the crisis are those Members of the United Nations that can least afford an effective response. More often than not, they are the small island developing States that are also the most vulnerable Members of this Organization.

The developed countries may have room to respond to the worsening energy crisis without jeopardizing other development programmes. But for us in Micronesia, we are painfully aware of the strong

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

08-51851 (E)

and adverse impacts on everything from government operations to the effect on individual households and families.

In a very real sense, the lingering global energy crisis has transformed the energy debate and highlighted the world's dependence on fossil fuel. Power outages in our state centres have become a regular phenomenon affecting our medical facilities, schools, businesses and everyday government operations, including services to our remote outer islands, which are reachable only by ships. These setbacks are the result of our inability to procure fuel at a reasonable cost. While we recognize that fossil fuel will, in the medium term, remain a necessity, the current energy crisis strengthens Micronesia's resolve to call for the acceleration of the development of technologies for renewable and affordable sources of energy. Micronesia recognizes that special assistance from the international community and financial institutions in the area of renewable energy is necessary to achieve this goal. We are grateful to our friends that have over time generously extended assistance to that end.

The General Assembly, by its own resolutions, recognizes everyone's right to food. On a global scale, that right is being threatened as the world faces a severe food crisis. Already, the cost of imported foodstuffs has increased considerably, and my Government and people are thus faced with yet another development challenge — one that has already been exacerbated by the energy crisis. The cost of rice, one of the main imported foodstuffs, which has become a main staple in my people's diet, is no longer affordable. My Government, in responding to the food crisis, has encouraged the people to increase the local production of our own crops. But that cannot be achieved without the support and cooperation of our development partners and the United Nations system.

The nexus between food security and climate change cannot be overlooked. In Micronesia, farmlands and inhabitants occupy the low-lying fringes and islands barely a few metres above sea level. Taro patches, which provided the main staple of our people for centuries, are now under threat by sea level rise. Already, many islands have experienced inundation of their taro patches and fields of other food crops by salt water, resulting in decreased crop production.

Of equal importance to our self-sufficiency and in meeting some of our nutritional needs is the bounty of our ocean. The ocean is of fundamental importance to Micronesia, as we rely heavily on it. The ocean sustains us, and its resources enrich us. At a time when the world food market is deeply affected by the food crisis, Micronesians are increasingly dependent on the bounty of the sea to provide for their food and for their economic development. It is therefore of paramount importance that we continue to conserve and manage sustainably the use of our marine and fisheries resources. But collateral catches and discards in commercial fisheries remain a concern to us. For Micronesians, these are critical resources that are of cultural importance, and our people depend upon them for their subsistence living. The international community must help us find ways to minimize and eliminate this wasteful use of resources.

Equally damaging to fish stocks is the incidence of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This practice continues to deprive our people of their food resources, while the illegal operators continue to reap and enjoy the rewards from this activity without any accountability. The major consumer and market outlets must reduce this illegal activity if we are to effectively eliminate this abhorrent and unsustainable practice.

The world's financial turbulence, as evidenced by the current delicate situation in the host country, is another matter of concern. While the situation emanates from the bigger economies, all of us are at risk, as we are all part of the globalized economy. We encourage the developed countries not to use this as a convenient excuse to reverse their gains in reaching the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product for official development assistance.

My delegation is encouraged by the spirit and determination of the Members of the United Nations to bring Security Council reform a step closer to reality. Our task remains difficult, but we are encouraged by the recent decision of the General Assembly and look forward to the beginning of the process of intergovernmental negotiations. Among other things, we reiterate our support for the expansion of both membership categories and reaffirm our long-standing view that Japan and India, from the Asian Group, should become permanent members of a reformed Security Council. We also renew our support for Germany, from Western Europe.

In the attainment of the international development goals, there is no single issue that presents such an enormous challenge to small island developing States, such as the Federated States of Micronesia, than that of climate change. Micronesia is especially concerned about climate change and the grave threat of sea-level rise, which can literally wash away our islands and culture. Three recent articles have been published in the prestigious science journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, addressing the tipping points for abrupt climate change, including sea-level rise.

A tipping point is a point of no return beyond which an element of the climate system abruptly tips into a new state, with a profound impact on the planet. Examples include tipping points for the melting of glaciers and snow pack from the Tibetan Plateau — the headwaters of most of the rivers in Asia — and the disintegration of the Greenland and West Antarctica ice sheets, which will cause metres of sea-level rise.

The news is startling. Simply put, it means that the planet is in peril — and the islands and low-lying States are, of course, in peril. But we cannot afford to be paralysed. We must undertake an aggressive programme of fast-track mitigation strategies, starting with those that are already justified by their strong co-benefits. This includes the strategy Micronesia promoted last year and again this year to strengthen the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Our strategy can play a strong role in protecting the climate system as well as the stratospheric ozone layer.

Let me make one final suggestion. Tipping points for abrupt climate change have been called the shadow that haunts climate negotiations. This issue is a shadow because it has never been squarely addressed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The global debate on climate change is predominantly framed from a sustainable development perspective. We could not agree more with that focus. But Micronesia is convinced that, while sustainable development is of paramount importance, we must also be assured of our security and our territorial integrity. We must approach climate change from a holistic perspective rather than limiting it to the dimensions of sustainable development, to humanitarian or technical issues, or to economic or environmental issues. Climate change also has an impact on our human rights. It has an impact on international peace and on our own security and territorial integrity, and on our very existence as inhabitants of very small and vulnerable island nations.

Experts have warned that climate change is also a threat to international peace and security. Yet, instead of addressing the issue squarely, the United Nations seems to be more concerned about turf and encroachment, as if it were wrong to admit that territorial integrity, national stability and security might be threatened by the impact of climate change, and that human conflicts might also arise as a direct or indirect result of climate change. Just as the IPCC reports, the Stern Review report and the 2007 Human Development Report inform the negotiations in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a report analysing the potential impact of climate change on international peace and security should provide additional reasons for urgent and adequate climate change mitigation actions.

Our future — our environment — is at stake. Our culture and our human rights are at stake. But we must not lose hope, because the entire world is represented here. The time to act is now, not later.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, President of The Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vieira (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is with great pleasure that I extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. In electing him amidst this rather complex global scenario, the international community places confidence in his qualities as a statesman, a spiritual leader and a defender of the most disenfranchised.

For my part, I am convinced that the experience that Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann gained at a historic time and in the particular circumstances in the lives of the friendly people of Nicaragua will serve him well in analysing and better understanding the challenges we face in this, the first decade of the twenty-first century. I count on his wisdom and balance, in the conviction that spiritual force will always inspire him and help him preside over our deliberations with success. He can count on my personal support and on the cooperation of the delegation of my country, Guinea-Bissau.

Allow me also to thank his predecessor for the results achieved at the last session. I would also like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication and for the spirit of innovation he has shown in fulfilling his duties. His report on the international situation (A/63/1) emphasizes the gravity of the major challenges the world is facing as well as the complexity of the reforms that are needed to improve the functioning and efficiency of the Organization and the working conditions for its staff.

We agree with him that in order to more efficiently solve the numerous problems of our planet, we need an organization which is less bureaucratic, capable of adopting new technologies and possessing sufficient financial means and competent and highly motivated staff. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General with a view to increasing the Organization's capacity to maintain peace and to address global issues. We also support his proposal to introduce, in the Secretariat in particular, new working methods based not only on the recognition of individual skills, but also on an emphasis on teamwork.

The present international situation demands serious reflection about the cause of the present crisis which greatly affects our countries. The three main elements of the crisis — energy, food and international finances, to which we would add the disastrous consequences of climate change — call for a better coordination of our efforts in the pursuit of innovative, courageous and adequate solutions leading to the establishment of a new world order, one which is more just and equitable and which is capable of responding to the realities of an interdependent and globalized world.

The increase in oil prices has destabilizing effects on our economies. The cost of producing electrical energy in particular has become an unsustainable burden for the poor countries and a major obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In my country, Guinea-Bissau, for example, the lack of energy seriously compromises all socio-economic activities, particularly hospital care and the distribution of drinking water, which is essential for guaranteeing hygiene and public health. How can a poor country like ours face the unjustified increase in the price of oil? What means do we have at our disposal to face the adverse consequences of a system which has been poorly based on speculation and which has nothing to do with the law of supply and demand? Is it not the right time for us to think about creating a world fund to mitigate the effects that are jeopardizing our ability to reach the Millennium Development Goals? How can we invest in and improve our infrastructure in such vital areas as health, education and agriculture if we are continuously compelled to spend enormous resources from our already limited funding to purchase fuel?

Moreover, the tremendous increase in food prices on the international market and the hunger and malnutrition which could affect many countries, in Africa in particular, are also matters of great concern and impel us to take action and implement appropriate agricultural policies with sufficient financial means so that we can invest in the creation of modern and affordable means of production.

Saying that agriculture is a priority should not be a mere slogan. We need to be reminded that the right to food is a fundamental right and is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose sixtieth anniversary we are celebrating this year. Every country should be able to guarantee food autonomy. We therefore need to examine and reformulate conditions for obtaining agricultural credits in particular.

A food shortage can pose a serious threat to the peace and security of a country. At the international level, we need to seriously discuss how to improve our capacity to respond effectively to the food crisis by putting into practice new scientific knowledge and by applying technologies suited to the climate conditions of the various regions of our planet and to the social and economic realities of our respective peoples.

In an interdependent and globalized world, we have to strive to establish and ensure respect for rules capable of regulating the international, financial and trading system without impeding the free flow of capital. But the international financial system, which is already affected by serious distortions, cannot be based only on a quest for speculative profit and on unlawful behaviour, which can have enormous consequences, as is the case now in many countries, where thousands of families have financial difficulties, particularly in the area of housing credits. Unfortunately, the consequences of these poor practices are not limited to a few countries.

The international community must react to all of these challenges. But how can we succeed without close cooperation among all countries of the world? We need cooperation in order to face climate change and to mitigate the effects of natural disasters such as the terrible hurricanes which have caused so much destruction in countries in the Caribbean, such as Cuba and Haiti, and also in Houston, Texas.

Our main goal should be to foster dialogue in all circumstances — dialogue among the countries, peoples, cultures, religions and civilizations of the world. It is only through dialogue that we will be able to identify our differences and find solutions in our common interest.

We need dialogue and negotiation at the international level to prevent and solve conflicts, such as the conflict in the Middle East, and to preserve the lives of human beings in danger, in Darfur and in Somalia, for example. We need dialogue and negotiation to defend and protect the most vulnerable, in particular women and children, by promoting and ensuring respect for human rights, the principle of democracy and the rule of law.

At the national level, we need dialogue aimed at creating appropriate conditions for the consolidation of democracy through free, transparent and credible elections, as we intend to do in Guinea-Bissau on 16 November.

Finally, we should further dialogue and negotiations with the view to promoting a policy of inclusion that guarantees the active participation of all stakeholders, above all women and youth, and civil society in general, in building peace and political stability and in creating the necessary conditions for development.

Although confronted with complex international situations, the international community has ways of facing those challenges. However, real political will is needed from us all. The United Nations can play an even more decisive role in preventing and resolving conflicts, in protecting our planet and in creating better living conditions for millions of people. Thus we need a United Nations that is better organized, less bureaucratic and better suited to confronting those many challenges.

We reiterate our full support for the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in the implementation of much-needed reforms for the greater efficiency, capacity to respond and credibility of the United Nations. We equally support the reform process undertaken by the Member States of our Organization in order to democratize the United Nations system, in particular the Security Council, the enlargement of which remains a priority for us all, considering the new economical and political reality of today's world and above all the need to address the historic injustice done to the continent of Africa for more than 60 years.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati III: I am pleased to address this Assembly on behalf of my delegation from the Kingdom of eSwatini. The Assembly gives us the opportunity as Heads of State and Government to share ideas and experiences. It enables us to shape the future of our countries and pave a way for a better world, where we can all live with each other in harmony. Let me extend our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to the entire staff of the United Nations for their efforts in carrying out the vision and programmes of the United Nations.

The world continues to face many challenges, which include the catastrophic effects of climate change, complicated diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and food shortages. That situation is further compounded by high prices for fuel and food and the instability in international finance, which slow down our efforts to fight poverty and attain sustainable development.

It is encouraging to note that the United Nations, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme, continues to assist developing countries to find lasting solutions to the food crisis. In the light of that, my country has put in place various strategies to ensure food security. The nation continues to hold consultations on those issues. For instance, we had a national agricultural meeting last year and the Sibaya — the people's parliament — this year, which looked at ways of increasing our food production and other issues of national interest. The nation came up with different suggestions, and we are in the process of implementing them.

We developing countries were looking forward to positive results from the Doha round of negotiations, particularly on agriculture. Developing countries were hoping for secure and increased market access for their agricultural products. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. We hope those talks will be concluded soon for the benefit of the developing countries.

Swaziland fully supports the global dialogue to ensure that the world is rescued from the dangers of global warming and other damage to the environment. It is true that global warming is a major contributor to the many calamities such as earthquakes, flooding and persistent droughts that threaten the very existence of the human race.

Swaziland, like many other countries of the world, continues to be a victim of the devastating effects of climate change. We continue to suffer from a persistent drought. We continue to be hit by strong winds that cause wildfires. Those fires often destroy vast acres of our man-made forests, resulting in economic disruption, the waste of many years of investment and loss of life and property. We fully agree with the United Nations that failure to respond in a timely way and decisively to that threat will undermine national and international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to improve the living standards and welfare of all our peoples.

The high-level meeting on Africa's development needs came at the most opportune time. We are pleased with the adoption of the declaration (resolution 63/1) and we are looking forward to its effective implementation. There is indeed urgency in addressing Africa's special needs, in particular economic development, poverty reduction and issues of peace and security.

It should be noted that the cooperation and support of the international finance institutions is pivotal, for instance by ensuring improved accessibility to finance for Africa. That should also include making grants and loans available to African countries under preferential rates to fund infrastructure development, technology transfer, tourism and other projects that are meant to create wealth and economic growth.

As we pass the midpoint to the 2015 deadline for the MDGs we still face many challenges. This is more so because many of our people are still living in poverty and we continue to face a high unemployment rate. Notwithstanding, the commitment of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the achievement of the MDGs is unwavering. The MDGs are anchored within our national development strategy and the poverty reduction strategy and action plan, which aspire, among other things, to reduce poverty by more than half by 2015. All Government programmes are geared towards that vision and are being implemented with the guidance of all stakeholders and the nation at large.

Like many other countries, the Kingdom of Swaziland is on track for some of the MDGs. We are

doing everything possible to achieve universal education and are providing resources for every child to go to school. Efforts are being made to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, ensure environmental sustainability, reduce child mortality and to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, among other targets.

Peace, stability and security, which form the primary goals of the United Nations, remain key pillars of meaningful development. When those conditions prevail, our peoples can concentrate their energies and resources on the pursuit of productivity and wealth creation.

Members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are committed to upholding those pillars for a better life for all. We have put in place structures such as the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security to ensure their preservation and promotion. For that reason, we applaud the recent signing of the power-sharing agreement and the establishment of a Government of national unity in Zimbabwe. We look forward with optimism to the rebuilding process and the removal of all bottlenecks. In that regard, we urge the international community and the developed world to fully support the people of Zimbabwe. In the same spirit, we wish to see peacefully negotiated settlements for all conflicts that prevail in Africa and in different parts of the world.

The Kingdom of eSwatini joins the rest of the world in condemning all forms and acts of terrorism. We support efforts for the full implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in order to send a clear message to all perpetrators of terrorism. In line with the United Nations convention on terrorism, our parliament has recently promulgated the anti-terrorism act.

If the United Nations is to have a more effective role, its structure must be reformed to adapt to a world that has been constantly changing since the adoption of the Charter. These reforms should of course take place in a fair, just and balanced manner. It has been observed in the past that one of the most important of the reforms that require urgent attention is that of the Security Council. The widely held view is that the Security Council as constituted at present falls short of proper demographic representation of United Nations Members. The Kingdom of eSwatini looks forward to a speedy conclusion to the discussions on the reform of the United Nations.

We welcome the recent handshake between the senior leadership of the Republic of China on Taiwan and that of mainland China. This handshake gives us hope that the two are now talking to each other. Hopefully, this might lead to an amicable resolution of the cross-Strait relations, such that perhaps one day we might see them sitting next to each other here at the United Nations. It should be noted that the people of Taiwan have expertise and experience, which they are ready to share with the United Nations family. That is why Swaziland requests the United Nations to allow Taiwan to participate in its specialized agencies.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has just held a successful parliamentary election under a new constitution. The voter turnout was most impressive as the people exercised their right to vote for a government of their choice. As the nation continues to appreciate the power of parliamentary representation in a complex globalized world, we note that the electorate understands the importance of choosing candidates of high calibre with the capacity to handle the issues at hand. That gives us confidence that the new Parliament will assist with strategies that will further improve our socio-economic climate for the betterment of the living standards of our people.

The Kingdom of eSwatini reaffirms its commitment to the purpose and preservation of the central role of the United Nations in multilateral affairs. We treasure peace and development and amicable regional and international relations and, together with all nations, will work towards a peaceful and prosperous future for all humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ramos-Horta (*spoke in Portuguese*; *English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann on his well-deserved election to preside over the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. The sustained increase in the cost of energy, the growing demand for oil by industrialized countries and emerging economies, higher food prices, the lack of arable land and water in many regions and climate change are only some of the indicators of non-conventional threats to security that we all face today and increasingly in the future.

But crises also offer opportunities. Throughout the decades, hundreds of millions of people all over the world abandon their ancestral lands and move to cities in search of work and a better life, as Governments focus their attention and resources on cities and neglected rural populations. But as urban populations swell in numbers, the dream of a better life is turning into desperation. However, the twenty-first century may witness their return to their places of origin, if Governments can learn from this crisis and seriously invest in job creation programmes for rural areas, particularly in agriculture, in order to increase food production.

Increasing food costs, whatever the cause may be, are neutralizing the progress achieved in many developing countries towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. If the international community does not redouble and coordinate its efforts to significantly boost development assistance and market access, it will be nearly impossible for poor, non-oil-producing countries to achieve even the modest goals that we had set for them in 2001 with a view to reducing poverty in the world by half by 2015. Donor countries must quickly readapt their aid for development, emphasizing agriculture, particularly in support of small family and community projects, preservation of land and rainwater recovery, by increasing the percentage of official development assistance (ODA) from a modest 3 per cent in 2006 to at least 30 per cent. I note that in 1980, the percentage of all foreign aid dedicated to agriculture was 17 per cent, which had dropped to 2.9 per cent by 2006. Timor-Leste accordingly supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and an integrated framework in order to deal with immediate food needs worldwide and to provide the most vulnerable countries with the capacity they need to become self-sufficient.

As a newly independent country, Timor-Leste has benefited much from the generosity of the international community. Donors will say that they have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to my country in the last few years, and that is true. However, we must ask ourselves if the aid has helped to improve the lives of the majority of our population. The answer is yes and no. But we all could do better if the bulk of the aid was not used to cover the costs of the endless study missions and redundant reports, but was invested on the ground in small rural development initiatives.

(*spoke in English*)

Timor-Leste is a least developed country. However, Almighty God has bestowed on us some modest oil, gas and other mineral wealth. Our oil and gas revenues are modest, averaging only $100 million to $150 million a month. It could be argued that, for a country of slightly over one million people, this amount is not too bad. By the end of this year, our Petroleum Fund, which was established in 2005, will have accumulated in excess of $3 billion, all invested in United States treasury bonds. A writer in *The Economist* recently stated that those who invest in United States treasury bonds are people who like to lose money. We may be among them. We agree with that remark, and Timor-Leste is seeking to reinvest our modest revenues in diversified portfolios around the world.

While our first obligation is to make use of our oil wealth for the sustainable development of our country and to address the immediate needs of our poorest, we are not indifferent to the suffering of our fellow human beings in other parts of the world. When the Asia region was hit in December 2005 by a tsunami of major proportions, our Government immediately contributed $50,000 for the victims in Indonesia, and

our citizens took up their own collection of donations and raised an additional $70,000.

Now, in response to several natural disasters that have affected tens of millions of our fellow human beings, Timor-Leste promptly decided to donate $500,000 for the victims of the earthquake that hit the Chinese province of Sichuan; $500,000 for the victims of Cyclone Nargis that hit Myanmar on 2 May, to be channelled through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat; and $500,000 for Cuba to assist the victims of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, to be channelled directly to the Cuban authorities. Starting in 2009, Timor-Leste will contribute $1 million annually to assist child-related programmes in Myanmar and Somalia through United Nations agencies like UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

We believe that, even though we are poor, or because we are poor, we should better understand and feel the pain of the poorest of the poor and must be among the first to help others less fortunate than us.

In my address today, I shall touch upon three international issues: Myanmar, the United States embargo against Cuba and the question of Western Sahara.

Timor-Leste's stance on Myanmar is aligned with the stance taken by our immediate neighbours in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We believe in particular that while strong denunciations of abuses are justifiable and that sanctions might be morally justifiable, there cannot be a long-term solution in Myanmar without the consent and full partnership of that country's army. Hence, the challenge for those involved is to persuade the military that their own interests as a group will not be compromised in any future democratic arrangement. Any other strategy seeking to sideline the military or that the military sees as undermining their power and future safety will not succeed and will only prolong the agony of all in that sad country.

Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which brought devastation to the Caribbean, ruined the Cuban economy. The country's material losses are staggering, with initial estimates showing the losses to approach a total of at least $5 billion. Timor-Leste has nearly 700 East Timorese medical students in Cuba, and over 140 East Timorese are studying medicine in our national university with Cuban medical instructors. In addition, there are nearly 300 Cuban doctors working in our country, distributed through all districts and sub-districts. Cuban adult education specialists assist us in our adult literacy campaign, benefiting thousands of adults. The costs of those programmes are borne almost entirely by Cuba.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While I commend the United States and any country that stands for universal democratic values and that provides moral support for those promoting democracy in their own countries, I submit that punitive measures imposed on poor developing countries for the perceived sins of their leaders cannot be morally justified.

As a friend of the United States, I humbly appeal to its next Administration and to Congress to lift the embargo against Cuba. Such a gesture would be honourable, and my admiration for the United States would only increase. As it is, as I witness the impact of United States sanctions on a small developing country, as well as its refusal to provide unconditional assistance to Cuba following the devastation caused by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, my heart bleeds in sorrow and my admiration for the United States seriously diminishes. In that connection, I wish to express once again our most heartfelt sympathy and solidarity with the people of Haiti and others in the Caribbean region who were affected by the recent natural disasters.

With regard to the situation in Western Sahara, Timor-Leste is guided by the stance taken by the regional organization that is most competent on this matter — the African Union — and guided by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, all of which clearly and unequivocally recognize the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. That is the core of the issue and the root cause of the ongoing conflict. Hence, Timor-Leste joins with the African Union in calling for strict respect for the inalienable right of the Saharawi people to self-determination.

I now turn to the situation in my own country. On 11 February, I was shot and nearly died as a result. I escaped by an act of God and thanks to the professionalism and dedication of doctors and nurses at the Australian army medical centre in Dili and the

doctors and nurses at the Royal Darwin Hospital. To them, and to all who have prayed for my life and my recovery, I once again express my eternal gratitude. I stood at the frontier between life and death; I saw the darkness of death and the beauty of life, which I nearly left behind.

The attack against Prime Minister Gusmão and myself shocked the nation, and my near-death served to unite the people in opposing violence. Since then, the situation in Timor-Leste has been more peaceful than it has been in many years, without any politically motivated violence so far; even common crime has been significantly reduced. The Government, led by Mr. Gusmão, a resistance hero, has made enormous efforts in stabilizing the country and delivering services to the people. Progress is visible. A growing number of internally displaced persons are returning home. Most camps are now empty. More than 700 former soldiers involved in the 2006 mutiny have accepted a Government financial package and have returned home.

On the economic front, our real gross domestic product (GDP) will show a 7 per cent increase by the end of this year. However, if oil and gas revenues are factored in, our economic growth will be approximately 19 per cent. While our real annual GDP per capita is less than $400, that figure jumps to more than $4,000 if oil and gas revenues are factored in. However, we would not have succeeded in pulling back from the brink without the prompt and steadfast support of the international community. I thank the Secretary-General and, through him, the entire United Nations family, in particular those serving in my country in various capacities, for their selfless contributions to the preservation of peace in Timor-Leste.

I also thank Australia and New Zealand for maintaining a robust and credible security force in my country in support of, and in close coordination with, our Government and the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste, under the leadership of Mr. Atul Khare, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is a most compassionate human being and a dedicated and tireless professional.

The professionalism of the International Security Forces is visible to all, and the behaviour of the soldiers is irreproachable. The same can be said of the United Nations police force in my country, comprising police from 40 countries, with particular reference to formed police units from Portugal, Pakistan, Malaysia and Bangladesh. We are blessed by the Almighty with non-negligible resources, and we can count on the generosity of our development partners, but challenges remain complex and multifaceted. However, I am confident that, with a shared vision and a commitment to serve the poorest of the poor, we will meet the Millennium Development Goals. We cannot fail. We shall not fail.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: I wish to begin by joining those who have congratulated Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. My delegation is confident that, under his able stewardship, the General Assembly will make progress on many issues scheduled for discussion during the current session. I would also like to pay special tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Kerim, who successfully presided over the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

The focus of our discussions at the present session, namely, the impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world, as well as the need to democratize the United Nations, relates well to our Millennium Development Goals. For us in the developing world, the eradication of poverty is the first

of our priorities and should indeed continue to receive serious attention.

The current global food crisis, characterized by escalating food prices, is causing untold suffering for the majority of poor people in many developing countries. That has been compounded by the energy crisis, with devastating social and economic consequences, especially for the most vulnerable in society such as women, children, the elderly and people living with HIV and AIDS. The crisis now qualifies as a humanitarian emergency that requires global solidarity to provide post-haste assistance in the form of food, water and energy.

For most developing countries, the crisis is competing with other pressing demands for scarce resources for development, including achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially as we are faced with declining official development assistance and foreign direct investment. The trend will, regrettably, reverse some of the progress made towards the attainment of the MDGs. It is therefore crucial that national efforts aimed at addressing the global food and energy crises be complemented by appropriate international assistance and interventions, including debt cancellation for low-income, food-deficient developing countries so as to release more resources to fight hunger.

Adequate support for food production programmes is absolutely necessary. We call for more research into better seed varieties and assistance in irrigation technology and improved water harvesting methods, necessary to mitigate the effects of climate change on agriculture. Zimbabwe believes that the challenges of climate change should be addressed in the context of development programmes that recognize the three pillars of economic and social thrusts, as well as environmental protection.

In the past year, Zimbabwe is proud to have played its modest part in promoting sustainable development through its chairmanship of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. The session examined the obstacles and barriers to development in the areas of agriculture, land use and rural development, and to drought-mitigation measures and desertification prevention in Africa. My Government, which was an active participant at the High-Level Conference on World Food Security, held under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome in June this year, will continue to play its active role in formulating policy recommendations on the subject of sustainable development targets.

We share the view that trade is an important tool for development, and so we reiterate our call for an open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial system that seeks the removal of the main trade barriers. Tariffs have unfortunately remained high on goods from developing economies, such as textiles and farm products. It is therefore disturbing that the Doha Round negotiations have collapsed without any indication of when they will be reconvened.

The objectives of the Charter of the United Nations in the economic arena will remain unfulfilled unless all Member States genuinely and seriously participate in efforts to redress challenges that persist in developing countries. Social justice, political stability and sustainable development in most developing countries can best be achieved through genuine and committed support for empowerment programmes through, inter alia, just land ownership patterns. We understand only too well in our context that sustainable development is not possible without agrarian reform.

My Government has therefore gone a long way towards laying the foundation for sustainable food production through its land reform programme. The majority of our rural people have been empowered to contribute to household and national food security and, indeed, to be masters of their own destiny. However, the effects of climate change, which have included recurrent droughts and floods in the past seven years, and the illegal, unilaterally imposed sanctions on my country have hindered Zimbabwe's efforts to increase food production. Once again, I appeal to the world's collective conscience to apply pressure for the immediate removal of those sanctions by Britain, the United States and their allies, which have brought untold suffering to my people.

Zimbabwe has always been and continues to be a firm believer in multilateral approaches to solving disputes, as opposed to the unilateralism favoured by some countries. Our experience has shown that the cooperative and pacific approach often leads to lasting solutions to conflicts. We therefore deplore the vindictive approach, which is often characterized by

self-righteous finger-pointing, double standards and the imposition of unilateral sanctions, to coerce smaller and weaker countries to bow to the wishes of militarily stronger States.

In addition, the unilateral and coercive economic measures that we have witnessed in recent years are again completely at cross purposes with the principles that guide international cooperation, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Not long ago, some permanent members of the Security Council sought to invoke Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations so that its weight of sanctions and other measures could be applied against my small country, which, by any stretch of the imagination, is no threat to international peace and security. What insanity is this that has afflicted some world leaders? Should that sacred document, the Charter of the United Nations, be allowed to suffer such undeserved emasculation and disgraceful abuse? And where is the protection of small and innocent countries like mine from threatened and real acts of aggression and punitive acts, often based on completely false allegations of violations of the rule of law, democracy or human rights? By the way, those who falsely accuse us of those violations are themselves international perpetrators of genocide and mass destruction.

The innocent masses of men, women and children who have perished in their thousands in Iraq surely demand retribution and vengeance. Who shall heed their cry? Surely those who invaded Iraq under false pretences and on the strength of contrived lies and in complete violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law must be made liable for them. They must be made to answer for their acts of aggression.

Zimbabwe derives solace from the fact that there are some permanent members of the Security Council that have taken principled stands in defending the Charter and protecting our sovereignty by ensuring that the Council acts not only within its mandate, but also impartially, objectively and justly. Indeed, their sense of justice ensured that Zimbabwe — a country that poses no threat to regional or international peace — did not fall prey to the cocktail of lies and machinations that had been designed by our detractors to encourage United Nations sanctions against us under Chapter VII. We thank them for upholding truth and objectivity.

While we recognize the important role of the good offices of the Secretary-General in helping Member States to resolve political and other problems, we are of the view that international civil servants should discharge their noble duties with sensitivity and neutrality. At no time should they seek to pander to the whims and caprices of the mighty against the weak. Similarly, we call on certain Security Council members to desist from abusing the Secretariat in an attempt to promote their political interests. It is our firm belief that the Secretary-General and his staff should be allowed to serve all Member States without fear or favour.

We reiterate our long-held view that the Security Council as presently constituted is undemocratic. Its present configuration renders it subject to manipulation by the powerful countries that use the Council as a readily available legitimizing forum for their political machinations. Thus, it is imperative that the Security Council be democratized by ensuring equitable geographical representation through an increase in its membership. Zimbabwe remains steadfast in its support for the Ezulwini Consensus, which calls for Africa to have two permanent seats with the same powers and prerogatives as the current permanent members, as well as two non-permanent seats.

We share the view that the General Assembly, a body that represents all of us and enjoys a wider representation of States, must continue to be the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations. We call for its revitalization to make it more effective and to enable it to fully carry out its Charter mandate. It is our fervent hope that a revitalized General Assembly will reassert its prestige, its pre-eminent role, its authority and its capacity to guide and direct other organs of the United Nations system. In that context, the tendency of some members of the Security Council to usurp the power and mandates of the General Assembly must be resisted.

I am pleased to report that the inter-party talks in Zimbabwe — for which our regional grouping, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), appointed a facilitator — ended with the signing of an agreement on the formation of an all-inclusive Government on 15 September. That was achieved entirely through African mediation, which is clear testimony that Africa is capable of overcoming its own challenges and problems, which, by the way, are often the remnants of colonialism. African leaders, working

together, were able to find an African solution to an African problem. In that regard, I wish to pay special tribute to President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, whose patience, fortitude, sensitivity, diplomatic skills and painstaking work made it possible for the Zimbabwean parties to overcome what had appeared to be insurmountable and intractable difficulties in reaching an agreement.

I would like to extend my thanks to SADC, the African Union and individual African and other leaders who lent their support to that initiative. My party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, will abide by the spirit and letter of the agreement to which we have appended our signature. As the Government, we are prepared to cooperate with all other countries that respect Zimbabwe's sovereignty. I would therefore like to appeal to those members of the international community that have imposed illegal sanctions against Zimbabwe to lift them so that my country can focus undisturbed on its economic turnaround programme.

In conclusion, we hope that we will continue to shape an Organization that upholds universal values and interests, attends to the urgent needs of those in need and remains in the service of humanity. Long live the United Nations!

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Biya (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to welcome the fact that Nicaragua, represented by Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, is presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Cameroon wishes him every success in carrying out his mission and assures him of its full cooperation. I wish also to pay a well-deserved tribute to Ambassador Kerim for the skill with which he led the work of the Assembly at its sixty-second session. Finally, I congratulate His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and reiterate our appreciation and support for his remarkable efforts in discharging his lofty mission.

By proposing the impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world and the need to democratize the United Nations as main themes of the general debate at the sixty-third session, the President focused our deliberations on core problems currently faced by the international community. I support this proposal all the more because Cameroon, like other countries throughout the world, has recently experienced social upheaval caused by the increasingly high cost of living.

As a result, we decided on and implemented a series of corrective measures, ranging from a reduction of taxes and customs duties on certain basic commodities to an increase in the salaries of State employees and measures to stabilize fuel prices. Those measures were lauded by the International Monetary Fund and undoubtedly had very positive effects. They did not, however, totally eliminate a problem of global proportions and one which requires global responses. The food crisis, which is one manifestation, has taken on alarming proportions throughout the world. All economies, irrespective of size, but particularly those of poor countries, are seriously affected. The most vulnerable populations are forced to forego health care and education just to feed themselves.

If appropriate responses are not found rapidly, there will be reason to fear dramatic repercussions on international trade, economic growth, social progress, political stability and, hence, global security. There is therefore an urgent necessity to act rapidly and collectively. We believe an appropriate response to the situation lies in ensuring coordination at the highest level. That is why I welcome the fact that the Secretary-General took the initiative to establish the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, whose aim is to promote a coherent and unified

response to the crisis. Cameroon shares the vision contained in the Comprehensive Framework for Action prepared by the Task Force.

We are of the view that a lasting solution to the crisis requires short- and medium-term actions, including increased food aid and investment in agriculture, the promotion of social welfare initiatives, reduction of agricultural subsidies in developed countries and restrictions on food exports from countries of the South. It is obvious that such solutions cannot be implemented without the participation of all and without the establishment of global food and agriculture partnerships involving all stakeholders, namely Governments, the private sector, civil society, donors and international institutions.

At a time when the midterm assessment of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is under way, the global food crisis appears as one of the major challenges the international community will have to face. In that regard, Cameroon wishes to join its voice to that of the Secretary-General in appealing for financing of the measures recommended by the Task Force. But, however acute the food crisis may be, it is far from being the only snag in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Concerning Africa in particular, there are many other challenges, such as persistent poverty, peace and security issues and the effects of climate change. Concerning poverty alleviation, our continent placed much hope in globalization which it supported in good faith, despite legitimate fears concerning the globalization of trade. It should be acknowledged that, on the whole, these hopes were dashed.

Beyond the global food crisis, it is obvious that Africa has felt the negative effects of the international financial crisis and the exponential oil price hikes: phenomena well beyond its control. In addition, it helplessly watched the erosion of official development assistance and the failure of the Doha Round negotiations, where its interests were relegated to the background. This role of powerless onlooker can only lead to deep frustration and cast doubts on the chances of achieving the Millennium Development Goals within the set time frames.

Nevertheless, Africa wants to believe that the international community will not give up assisting it to emerge from poverty and underdevelopment. For that reason, we fully appreciate the initiative of the United Nations to organize high-level meetings devoted to the development of our continent, on the sidelines of this session. On the economic front, Africa's immense potential remains largely untapped, and, although many African countries have been recording good economic performance, the continent remains the poorest on the planet. Hence the need for increased solidarity of the international community.

The growing impact of climate change, especially in Africa, is particularly disturbing; more than elsewhere, it affects areas on which the fate of future generations depends. There is thus an urgent need for joint action by the international community.

Such solidarity should also prevail when addressing the issue of migrants. The tragedies they experience are, to put it bluntly, inhuman. The atrocities and acts of discrimination they endure on a daily basis are intolerable. There is urgent need to jointly seek solutions to manage this exodus which drains Africa of the human resources it greatly needs. There is no gainsaying that the economic development of the continent is the one and only solution to that painful problem.

As regards peace and security, perhaps more than in any other area, Africa needs the active solidarity of the international community. There is reason to be satisfied with the progress made in several countries that were hitherto plagued by deadly confrontations, though it should be acknowledged that many hotbeds of tension and conflict still exist on the continent.

Here, the peace agreements signed after lengthy negotiations are yet to enter fully into force. There, force is used to jeopardize democratic achievements. Continuing confrontations in Somalia, the chronic instability along the borders of Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan, the daily tragedy faced by the population of Darfur and the recurrent eruption of violence in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi are all cause for serious concern.

Unfortunately, nor is our continent spared the threat of terrorism, which now has a global dimension. I am convinced that only global and resolute action will help address that issue. Cameroon will contribute its support as necessary.

The international community, and in particular the United Nations, are making commendable efforts to

promote peace in Africa. That is why the Organization must receive from all its Members the resources that it needs to ensure the effectiveness of its action. To that end, it should constantly express the common will and continue to be the crucible of the democratization of international relations.

The historic achievement recorded in the settlement of the dispute over the Bakassi peninsula is one of the best examples of the remarkable results that can be generated by an authentic desire for peace shared by the parties, with the judicious support of the international community.

The ceremony in Calabar on 14 August 2008, which marked the withdrawal of the Nigerian administration and police force from Bakassi and the transfer of authority to Cameroon, was undoubtedly the result of the commitment to peace shown by the leaders and peoples of both countries. In that regard, I wish to express my profound gratitude to friendly countries for the support they have continued to give to the implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice and to the Greentree Agreement. I wish to thank in particular the States witness to the Agreement, namely, the United States of America, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom.

The United Nations also played a decisive role in the settlement of that matter. The tireless efforts of Secretaries-General Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon and their representatives within the Mixed Commission deserve our gratitude.

Thus dawned a new era in relations between Cameroon and Nigeria, geared towards the quest for progress and development to which our two peoples aspire. It goes without saying that the two countries must henceforth do everything possible to consolidate the settlement and seize the opportunities offered to them to develop their relations in all areas. In that regard, I wish to reaffirm that Cameroon will respect all its commitments.

The delay in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals must spur us to redouble our efforts to carry out vigorous, joint and mutually supportive actions in fighting against poverty and for development.

The Government of Cameroon is resolutely committed to that end. I wish to pay homage to our population for the sacrifices they have made in that respect, as well as to our bilateral and multilateral partners for the multifaceted assistance they are providing to us. That assistance is invaluable to us, particularly in our efforts to promote better management of public resources. Within that framework we have launched a fierce fight against dishonest managers, which we intend to pursue ruthlessly.

Guided by a concern to improve the well-being of our people, we reaffirm from this rostrum our determination relentlessly to pursue our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. To perform that task successfully, we know that we can count on the understanding and support of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cameroon for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zardari: I come before the Assembly today in the name of my late wife, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, as a victim of terrorism representing a nation that is a victim of terrorism. I am a husband who has seen the mother of his children give her life fighting the menaces of terrorism and fanaticism, which haunt the entire civilized world. In her place and in her honour, I come before the Assembly as the elected President of a democratic Pakistan who received a mandate from two thirds of our Parliament

and assemblies. That extraordinary mandate of support was a vote of confidence in her, in her doctrine and in her message. The vote was an act of love and a demand for a democratic, moderate, modern, tolerant and economically just Pakistan — the essence of the Bhutto doctrine.

It has been 11 months since the first attack on my wife, on 18 October 2007, was followed by the adoption of a United Nations resolution calling for an inquiry into that crime against humanity. That United Nations resolution has so far been ineffective. After her assassination, on 27 December, the international community demanded an independent inquiry — a demand supported by resolutions adopted in Pakistan's Parliament and four provincial legislatures.

Today, we still do not know what forces and institutions were involved — who plotted and planned and coordinated and trained and paid for the murder of my wife, my nation's beloved leader. A United Nations investigation into the murder of the leader of the people of Pakistan would reassure them that the international community cares about them and that the United Nations Charter of justice is more than rhetoric. We owe it to her. We owe it to history. If a country's President and his children cannot obtain justice through the United Nations, how will the poor and the dispossessed around the world find reassurance that the United Nations is capable of protecting the weak and the suffering?

In the name of humanity and in the name of justice, the Organization must move forward quickly with the investigation into the assassination of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto so that, once and for all, the people of Pakistan and the rest of the world will know whose bloody hands took away one of the greatest women in history.

My wife courageously returned to Pakistan last year, openly confronting the forces of terror. Three million people turned out to welcome Benazir and the return of democracy to Pakistan. She was a brave woman who understood the dynamics of our region and the world — who understood the interrelationship between politics and economics, between social injustice and political dictatorship. For years, she told world leaders that dictatorship fuels extremism and that poverty fuels fanaticism. She outlined the Bhutto doctrine of reconciliation, so brilliantly presented in her last book. The Bhutto doctrine sets out a dual mission of combating dictatorship and terrorism while promoting social and economic reform and justice for the people of Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto understood that democracy was not an end, but a beginning; that a starving child has no human rights; that a father who cannot support his family is someone ripe for extremism.

Mr. Win (Myanmar), Vice-President took the Chair.

The Bhutto doctrine of reconciliation is a road map not only to a new Pakistan, but to a new era of peace and cooperation between East and West and among people of all faiths. It is a road map that, if followed, will enable us to avoid the clash of civilizations and the clash of religions, which is the terrorists' ultimate goal.

The Bhutto doctrine is the new century's equivalent of the Marshall Plan, which saved Europe after the Second World War. While the Marshall Plan was based on the principle that an economically sound Europe could and would resist communism, the pillar of the Bhutto doctrine is that an economically viable Pakistan will be the centrepiece of the victory of pluralism over terrorism. The Bhutto doctrine will ultimately prove to be as critical to the victory of freedom in this century as the Marshall Plan was critical to the triumph of liberty in the last. Ours is the doctrine of reconciliation; theirs is the doctrine of death.

Her killers thought that her elimination would end her dream of a democratic Pakistan and that the Balkanization of our region would enable the forces of darkness to prevail. But our nation rallied in the aftermath of her brutal and tragic assassination. If Al-Qaida and the Taliban believed that, by silencing Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, they were silencing her message, they were very wrong. We have picked up the torch and will fight against terrorists who attack us and terrorists who use our territory to plan attacks against our neighbours or anywhere in the world.

Ours is a bloody fight, and neither the personal pain that my children and I feel nor the pain of a nation that has been robbed of its greatest asset, its greatest leader, can be fully expressed. But the terrorists' lust for blood and hate has not been satisfied. Only last week, the forces of evil struck again in a bloody and cowardly attack against my people. A suicide truck

bomb destroyed a great building in our capital, barely a stone's throw away from my office and the House of Parliament.

Once again, Pakistan is the great victim in the war on terror. And once again, our people wonder whether we stand alone. Thousands of our soldiers and civilians have died fighting against the common enemies of humanity. We have lost more soldiers than all the 37 countries combined that have forces in Afghanistan.

The roots of today's terrorism can be traced to a war involving the world's super-Powers in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Afghanistan and Pakistan — and, increasingly, the entire world — are reaping the bitter harvest sown towards the end of the cold war. The world turned its back on Afghanistan after the Soviet defeat. In Pakistan, we were left with 3 million refugees within our borders. Their camps soon became breeding grounds for intolerance and violence. The world left South and Central Asia. We were left to live with the consequences. And one of the greatest of those consequences was the birth of Al-Qaida and the Talibanization of Afghanistan and parts of our tribal areas.

Yet, we do not look back at history. We are victims, but we will never be vanquished. On the contrary, the more of our children's blood they spill, the stronger is our determination to defeat them. We in Pakistan stand united and in defiance. We are resolved that our future will not be dictated by those who distort the spirit and laws of Islam for their sordid politics and political goals.

We may be the targets of international terrorism, but we will never succumb to it. Towards that end, we reach out to this Assembly and to the entire civilized world. Terrorism cannot be fought by military means alone. Fighting it requires political will, popular mobilization and a socio-economic strategy that wins the hearts and minds of nations afflicted by it.

Unilateral actions of great Powers should not inflame the passions of allies. Violating our nation's sovereignty is not helpful in eliminating the terrorist menace. Indeed, such actions could have the opposite effect.

Many participants in this great Hall today read about terror, while we live it. We do not learn about terror from reading newspapers or watching the evening news. We see our children and our wives being blown up before us. Our cities, neighbourhoods, streets, hotels and offices bear the brunt of the terrorist fanatic rage every single day.

A democratic Pakistan is in the process of reaching the national consensus necessary to confront and defeat the terrorists. Only a democratic Government can win this war. We are fighting the menace and we will continue to do so. But this fight is for the peace of the world. This fight is for the future of generations to come. Yes, we fight for ourselves, for our children, for our very soul. Yes, this war is our war, but we need the moral, political and economic support of the international community. In our stability lies the world's security. Globalization is not just economic; it is also political. The terrorist vision strikes out at all nations. We must draw a line on their rampage. And we must draw that line in Pakistan.

The question I ask the world's leaders in this august Hall is whether they will stand with us, just as we stand for the entire civilized world on the frontlines of this epic struggle of the new millennium.

I stand before this Assembly as the President of a great nation that just recently, in a decade of brutal military dictatorship, suffered human rights abuses and the systematic destruction of the foundations of democracy and civil society. Sadly, all too often, the world stood silent as dictators ruled our people with a bloody fist. Nations that were founded on democracy were silent for reasons of expediency. My wife would say that they danced with dictators.

Today, as we meet here in New York, the democratically elected leader of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, continues to be imprisoned in Yangon. She has suffered year after year under house arrest. The world must demand that that great woman finally be freed. We appreciate the efforts of Mrs. Laura Bush in that regard.

Today, the horror of terrorism that plagues our nation and threatens the world is a by-product of the lack of commitment to the values of democracy. When the world betrays democracy, it sets the table for disaster. We will all continue to pay the price.

In these early years of the new millennium, there are two great battles before mankind. First, there is the battle for democracy and liberty against dictators, the fight for universal human rights. That is the hallmark

of this Organization. At the same time, we are fighting in the trenches of the battle that will determine the course of this century — the battle against extremism and terrorism, between the forces of ignorance and the forces of education, between bigotry and tolerance, between justice and discrimination, between confrontation and reconciliation.

Democracy is not like a switch that can be turned on and off when it is convenient. It is a universal value guaranteed to all men and women. The outcome of these struggles will determine whether the noble experiment embodied in the hallowed halls of the United Nations will succeed or fail. The struggle between the Bhutto doctrine of reconciliation and the terrorists' doctrine of death will determine the future of mankind. Let not the extremists who would manipulate Islam for their political ends define us to the world. They are rabid but they are few. It is time for the world to take notice. We are not the cause of the problem of terrorism; we are its victims.

We are an aggrieved nation, not one that has caused grief. We have largely fought this battle alone. We have shared our airbases, our airspace, our intelligence and our armed forces in a coordinated effort to contain terrorism.

It is time for the developed world to step up to the plate to help us and in turn help itself. The fight against terrorism and extremism is a fight for the hearts and minds of people. It cannot be won by guns and bombs alone. The fight must be multifaceted. The battleground must be economic and social as well as military.

We will win when people are mobilized against fanatics. To mobilize them, we have to give them hope and opportunity for their future. They need jobs. Their children need education. They must be fed. They must have energy. We must give people a stake in their own government and we must demonstrate to them that democracy works, that democratic governance can improve their everyday life.

An economically viable Pakistan will be a stable Pakistan. And a stable Pakistan will suck the oxygen out of the terrorist agenda. Economic justice and political democracy are the worst nightmares of terrorists. We must all fight this epic battle together as allies and partners.

But just as we will not let Pakistan's territory be used by terrorists for attacks against our people and our neighbours, so we cannot allow our territory and our sovereignty to be violated by our friends. Attacks within Pakistan that violate our sovereignty actually serve to empower the forces against which we fight together.

I am a democratic President of a democratic country that intends to be a model to our region and to our religion. I am the President of a vibrant, modern, tolerant, peaceful, moderate democracy committed to economic and social justice. People, including my wife, died for this movement. We will not waste their sacrifices.

We will work patiently to convince leaders in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and our Pakhtunkhwa province to accept the writ of the Government and turn their back on terrorists. The terrorists may blow up our girls' schools but we will rebuild them, brick by brick, inch by inch. We are in this battle to win and we know how we have to do it.

We will work together with our neighbours in Afghanistan and with the NATO forces stationed there to ensure security for our common border. We will continue the composite dialogue with India so that our outstanding disputes are resolved. As I discussed with the Indian Prime Minister yesterday, whether it is the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir or cooperation on water resources, India and Pakistan must and will accommodate each other's concerns and interests. We must respect and work with each other to peacefully resolve our problems and build South Asia into a common market of trade and technology.

Better relations between Pakistan, Afghanistan and India would help create a regional environment more conducive to reducing militancy in our region. But let me be clear to those in this Hall and to the terrorists lurking in their caves, plotting their next assault on humanity. If necessary, we will confront evil with force — our police, our army and our air force. We will turn the power of the State against the stateless terrorists. We will turn the power of justice against the chaos of anarchists. We will turn the power of right against the darkness of evil.

I did not come to the office of President, to this moment, by design. As my wife once said about herself, I did not choose this life — it chose me. An

extraordinary combination of circumstances brought me to this moment. It has not been an easy road.

I spent nine years in prison, in solitary confinement, as a hostage to my wife's struggle for democracy and to our party's future. I was unjustly imprisoned under a judicial system manipulated and controlled by the forces of dictatorship. I refused to break under pressure. My years in prison made me a stronger person and hardened my resolve to fight for democracy and justice. Those years prepared me for this moment.

Terror took my wife's life, but the terrorists cannot kill my wife's dream. Her vision, her passion and her force are now our common task. The Benazir Bhutto doctrine of reconciliation lives on; it guides us in our endeavours. Her reconciliation is the mantra of the new era. I am dedicated to implementing what she proposed. I wish I could do it at my wife's side, but now I will do it in my wife's place.

Pakistan will prove wrong all the negative predictions about its future. We will show the way by overcoming suspicions towards and from our neighbours and building a future for our people.

Throughout her life, my wife struggled to make the world a better place for our children, the children of Pakistan and the children of the world. I owe it to her memory and to all of the martyrs of democracy to continue to do the same until the Bhutto doctrine of reconciliation is not just her dream but the world's reality.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement just made.

Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 ***(continued)***

General debate

Address by Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Taha (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is indeed my pleasure, on behalf of the leadership, people and Government of the Sudan, to greet the General Assembly as it meets in its sixty-third session. We wish its deliberations every success and hope to witness tangible progress on all the issues and challenges that must be given priority by this Organization. We refer, of course, to the maintenance of international peace and security; realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); containing the food crisis, poverty, hunger, climate change and water shortages; and reactivating the role of the United Nations in a changing world.

We are indeed delighted to see Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann chairing this session. We are confident that, with his wisdom, experience and perspicacity, we may indeed be hopeful and optimistic that the international community will realize its ambitions for global development, reconstruction and prosperity.

I also wish to strongly commend and thank Ambassador Srgjan Kerim for the competence with which he conducted the work of the sixty-second session. We also thank the Secretary-General and his staff for the efforts that they continue to deploy in the service of the mandate of this Organization.

This session of the General Assembly falls amid some very important and particular developments in the international and regional spheres. Millions are looking forward to a world of peace, stability and prosperity that respects the common values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, notably respect for the sovereignty of States, their choices, the peaceful settlement of disputes and joint cooperation in all fields.

Although we continue to hope for and work towards a capable and efficient United Nations and a complete framework for multilateral cooperation that takes into consideration the wealth and diversity of the international community, we in the developing

countries, especially in the African continent, remain profoundly convinced of the need to maintain those objectives and principles. We recall that our African continent has had a long and difficult journey as a result of its backwardness since it broke the yoke of colonialism and fought its post-independence wars, during which the objectives and aspirations of Africans to lead a dignified life were forever thwarted by the so-called lost decades of development and the unfavourable economic and trade atmosphere. The political and security situation of the African continent has made it vulnerable to foreign interventions and conspiracies that have undermined its stability and rendered peace a more distant prospect.

In addition to discussing the various and well-known threats and dangers facing the African continent and all developing nations, I should like to draw attention to and warn about the danger of the abuse of what is called "universal jurisdiction". That concept that was condemned in July 2008 at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, which called on the Security Council and the General Assembly to seriously examine the issue and to cancel it. The politicization and abuse of the aforementioned principle clearly shows that disregard for and non-compliance with political and professional norms that are guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, together with the application of double standards, pose grave dangers for the region and beyond, threatening the stability and prestige of the institutions of the international order.

Achieving peace and stability in the Sudan has been a firm priority objective of our Government, which has demonstrated its commitment to the option of peace, as reflected in the historic milestone achieved when we signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 9 January 2005 in Nairobi. The Agreement, which ended the longest-running conflict on the African continent since the colonial era, was reinforced by the Darfur Peace Agreement, signed at Abuja, and the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, signed at Asmara, Eritrea.

Our efforts to achieve peace have proceeded from our conviction that peace will create a favourable environment for the development of the Sudan's vast agricultural resources and wealth, which in turn will ensure the sustainability of peace. Furthermore, peace in the Sudan is a strategic goal aimed at reinforcing stability in neighbouring countries, the region and the continent. Thus, we appeal to all members of the international community, through the Assembly, to support the efforts to achieve peace and stability in the Sudan. By so doing, they will promote, enhance and guarantee peace and stability in the region and on the African continent. We must avoid doing anything that could negatively affect or jeopardize those efforts.

While our country is firmly committed to implementing the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in particular by holding general elections during the first half of next year and by completing our national programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and de-mining, we hope that the international community will honour its financial commitments, including those pledges announced in Oslo in 2005 and in Norway in May 2008.

Here, in view of the difficulties and obstacles that we have encountered in implementing the Agreement, I should like to recall a principle of Western thought regarding the difference between words and deeds. We in the Sudan believe that our desire for the cancellation of our foreign debt is in accordance with the spirit and requirements of peace agreements, since that debt is hampering our reconstruction efforts. We also call for the lifting of the unilateral sanctions imposed against our country, which defeat the true purpose of a comprehensive peace. In that way, the citizens of the Sudan could benefit from the dividends of peace.

The problem of Darfur has been the chief concern of the people and the Government of the Sudan. No one is more eager than our people to achieve peace and stability in Darfur, which, after all, is their problem and their responsibility. From this rostrum, we reaffirm our full commitment to achieving a peaceful political settlement of the crisis in Darfur, one that will enhance the ongoing peace process through positive actions. These include the implementation of the People of the Sudan initiative, aimed at developing a national consensus as to the best way to resolve the issue, as stated by the President of the Republic during his recent important visit to Darfur; the appointment of Mr. Jebreel Basoli, Joint Chief Negotiator, whom we fully support; the establishment of an Arab-African committee, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Qatar, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, to mediate peace negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements in

Darfur, in close cooperation and coordination with the representatives of the African Union and the United Nations; and the implementation of the initiative that was supported and welcomed by the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Sudanese Government of National Unity sincerely hopes that those efforts will promptly lead to comprehensive peace and stability in Darfur.

We had hoped that the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement on 5 May 2006 as a result of the generous mediation of the African Union would encourage the movements that had not signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to do so. In particular, in order to ensure full implementation of the Agreement, power-sharing and the establishment of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority, male and female citizens of Darfur have been appointed to executive and legislative positions and various arrangements have been put in place to ensure wealth- and power-sharing and security.

However, as members are all aware, the movements that oppose peace have continued to boycott all the negotiations, undermining the efforts of Mr. Jan Eliasson and Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim. The movements have continued to reject the peace option and to choose the military option, not to serve the interests of the people of Darfur but to pursue a policy aimed at regime change in the Sudan, as demonstrated in the military aggression carried out on 10 May 2008 against the Sudanese capital itself. Those movements would not have been able to do what they did had they not been receiving mixed or wrong messages from some circles, since they saw that the non-signatories were not being pressured to join the organ of peace, while those who signed the treaty were. That increased the intransigence of the non-signatories, threatening the chances for peace and the humanitarian conditions.

With regard to peacekeeping — and in accordance with the principles of positive cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union under the agreement reached at the high-level understandings in Addis Ababa on 16 November 2006, which led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) establishing the mandate of the joint African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) — the Government of the Sudan has fulfilled its commitments with regard to its role in the peace process in Darfur and indeed has fulfilled many other steps. The status of forces agreement has been concluded. The mandate was transferred from the African Union Mission in the Sudan to UNAMID on 31 December of last year. The headquarters have been built and operational capacities have been established in the three states of Darfur. Periodic coordination meetings between the Government of the Sudan and the command of the joint operation have been deliberating on all the problems and resolving them.

On the humanitarian level, the Government of the Sudan remains committed to executing the humanitarian communiqué concluded with the United Nations on 28 March 2007, which is being implemented in an exemplary manner as a result of the matchless follow-up mechanism to track the implementation of the humanitarian communiqué and the special efforts of the Government to open humanitarian corridors in Darfur and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. Once again we renew our commitment to that effort.

At a time when the Government of National Unity has taken giant strides to implement the peace agreement, with the full support of the President of the Republic, the electoral law has been passed and approved by parliament to usher the Sudan to yet another phase of democratic transformation and peaceful transfer of power through general elections to be held in 2009.

The country is fully mobilized and engaged in turning over the page of violence and war in Darfur, and amid those developments came the request of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to the Pre-Trial Chamber to issue an arrest warrant. An arrest warrant against whom? Against a man who ended the longest war in Africa, a man who brought peace to eastern Sudan and laid the foundations for peace in Darfur. That request targeted the leadership of the State, the symbol of its sovereignty and dignity, in a failed attempt at political and moral assassination, as well as causing delay or erosion of the peace process for ulterior motives unrelated to justice or to the realization of peace and stability in Darfur, and in a State that is not a signatory to the Rome Statute.

Moreover, the actions of the Prosecutor disregard the road map agreed upon by the Sudan, the United Nations and the African Union on the basis of the Addis Ababa understanding in November 2006 and the international conference on Darfur held alongside the last session of the General Assembly. The road map

was further reiterated and endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1769 (2007). The road map was based on four tracks: rehabilitation and development, the peace process as a priority, the peacekeeping operation and the humanitarian track. Thus the Prosecutor is turning upside down the issue of accountability, which the Government of the Sudan supports and which is already being handled by a competent and effective Sudanese judiciary, and giving it a completely different character by introducing it into the International Criminal Court and destabilizing justice and peace in the Sudan and the region. It is an open invitation to the rebel movements that oppose peace to stay away from the peace option. The actions of the Prosecutor seek to influence negatively the elections to be held in 2009, through which the Government will enter into a new phase of peace and democratic transformation.

From this rostrum, in the name of the Government and the people of the Sudan, who were unanimous in rejecting that step, I thank and commend all the active forces of more than two thirds of the international community, which through their regional, geographic and political institutions and organizations have condemned the measures taken by the ICC Prosecutor and called on the Security Council to rectify the situation arising from that action. Here I specifically mean the member States of the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the member States of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and other countries that have expressed their disapproval and their complete rejection of that step taken by the ICC Prosecutor.

I would like to assure the Assembly that the Government of the Sudan is making progress in its resolute and principled goal of achieving lasting peace and removing the bitterness of war and its legacy in accordance with the values and principles of the people of the Sudan and their mores, customs and traditions, which are based on peaceful coexistence, reconciliation and tolerance. The establishment of peace in Darfur and in the Sudan and the steps taken by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court are two parallel lines that can never meet, hence such situations must be rectified as soon as possible and there must be a return to the commitment to the political process.

Since the issue of more democratic international relations was one of the subjects proposed for the general debate of this session, our country, like all other African countries, has been following the efforts to reform this Organization — especially the Security Council, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security and which has remained as it is since its inception while the entire international arena has been changing. That made reforming that Council an urgent priority, so that it can be more responsive to the aspirations of the developing nations.

I am referring specifically to Africa, which has no permanent representation in the Security Council, whose agenda is beset with African issues. Here I would like to reiterate that the Sudan is in accord with the African position included in the Ezulwini document on the issue of reforming the modus operandi and rules of procedure of the United Nations so that it can be more democratic, transparent, express equitable geographic representation of the world's continents and reflect the developments that the world has seen since 1945.

Economic and trade developments compete with each other. The failure of economic structures in many developing and least developed countries constitutes a problem that raises obstacles for the movement to realize the MDGs as soon as possible. The current structure of the international economy, with its restrictive, unfair trade practices and restrictions on the exports of developing nations, is a negative impact of globalization, in addition to the heavy external debt burden that paralyzes the region's national economic development. Those obstacles are very serious and retard development, especially in the African continent.

The United Nations Millennium Summit emphasized the special position of Africa as a priority with regard to international assistance and channels of cooperation and support through relevant initiatives like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and other regional, subregional and national initiatives.

Here, let me mention that the Sudan has implemented several quick-income projects and several short-term projects to benefit vulnerable groups. Regarding the attainment of MDGs — especially the alleviation of poverty, the development and support of education, health and the fight against diseases like

malaria — the State is still directing its efforts to attain those objectives and to realize sustainable development. We must take into consideration the potential of the country and its vast resources, which, according to reports of relevant international organizations, make it capable of helping to solve the global food crisis by providing food for millions around the world.

National efforts in the Sudan can currently be seen in the context of efforts to develop and revitalize the agricultural sector and to realize a comprehensive green revolution. Here I must emphasize the serious negative impact of phenomena like climate change and environmental deterioration, which have constituted reasons for war and conflict in Africa. The conflict in Darfur is one practical example of the impact of those phenomena and how they directly affect the daily lives and needs of individuals.

The Sudan, as a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1999, emphasizes the need to put more effort and coordination into intensifying multilateral action to face those phenomena and to achieve a more efficient system for the post-2012 era. Developing nations must also participate in dealing with the causes and effects of climate change.

The Sudan is of the view that developed nations should fulfil their commitments to capacity-building and should provide the financial and technical resources to support developing nations in facing those problems.

The Sudan emphasizes the fact that the maintenance of international peace and security requires, first and foremost, an urgent solution to the problem in Palestine and that the situation be dealt with in a decisive and serious manner, especially in view of the tragic situation that the Palestinian people in the occupied territories are facing. The international community is called upon today more than any other time to put pressure on the occupying authorities to abide by resolutions of international legitimacy so that the Palestinian people may realize their full right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that for the United Nations to continue playing its important role imposes on us a collective responsibility to find the solid will and determination to make the Organization a truly collective framework for multilateral, international efforts to deal effectively and justly with international issues and problems. The United Nations must establish clear and transparent partnerships according to the Charter with regional organizations in order to realize regional and international peace and security. The Sudan, as a committed and active member of this Organization, will remain faithful to the objectives that constitute our collective effort.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan for the statement just made.

Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rodríguez Zapatero (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): In a few weeks' time, it will be 60 years since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And here we find ourselves at the midpoint in the application of our strategies for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights bears witness to the determination to leave us a better world than the one known by our fathers' generation — a generation that suffered, struggled, defeated totalitarianism and condensed its aspirations for freedom and prosperity in that text. The Millennium Development Goals reflect the will, no less determined, of our generation to confront extreme poverty once and for all, so that we may leave to our

children a world without millions of human beings suffering from hunger and poverty on a daily basis.

Together, the observance of human rights and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals are perhaps the most noble aspirations ever envisioned by humanity, and the most devoted to the dignity of individuals.

Just by that fact alone, we can say that, despite all of the suffering deliberately caused by human beings over the last decades, during that time we have learned and we have made progress. We can feel satisfied that we have identified and broadened the horizons of human beings on our planet. We can feel satisfied by that, but by no means should we be complacent.

There is no room for complacency because if we look at the horizon for the MDGs, as we have for human rights, the conclusion would be the same: the results are still far from fulfilling our aspirations, precisely because those aspirations retain all of their value, and even grow in value, with the passage of time.

Ten years ago, at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, President Nelson Mandela recalled that poverty is an offence against the Declaration and is the result not of any force of nature, but rather of the action or non-action by human beings, in particular those in leadership positions in politics, the economy and other areas of human activity.

Aware of that responsibility, eight years ago Member States undertook the unique effort, in historic terms, to alleviate poverty for millions of people worldwide. I wish to make my opinion clear that we have not progressed as we should have or as we planned. However, the needs are the same or even greater than they were when we agreed the Millennium Development Goals eight years ago.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

If we are to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, we cannot just sit back. We cannot blame our failure to meet our obligations on the economic situation. We cannot use any circumstance as an excuse to avoid honouring our commitments. It is a question not only of adhering to irreplaceable ethical standards, but of making responsible efforts towards stability and international equality.

We must also work urgently to establish a new world financial order that would prevent the recurrence of situations like that we are currently experiencing. It is also urgent that we continue to fight with determination against the hunger and poverty that cause millions of people to suffer unacceptably and continue to be a source of conflict and migratory pressures that are difficult to control.

I am speaking on behalf of a country — Spain — that is making great efforts of solidarity in its cooperation policies. Over the past four years, Spain has been the State with the highest increase in its official development assistance; our goal is to reach 0.7 per cent of our gross national income by 2012. Spanish society offers that commitment in response to the current food crisis.

My country believes that the best way to reaffirm the full value of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to keep 2015 firmly in view is to strengthen the historical connotation of each. That connotation is nothing less than the exaltation of human dignity as both an impregnable wall against arbitrariness and despotism and as a curb against extreme poverty.

A few weeks ago, on behalf of the Government of Spain, I made a proposal that I would like to reiterate today. The year 2015 should be designated as the year of a universal moratorium on the death penalty. That would be a first step towards its abolition. I call upon representatives of countries that still include capital punishment in their legal system to support the measure and to participate in a process of reflection on the meaning of that punishment inflicted by States. It might seen utopian to aspire to achieve the full enjoyment and universal recognition of human rights and the eradication of extreme poverty in the course of a single generation, but those goals are not utopian and never will be. Utopias are often simply premature truths. We must not delay or dismiss them with resignation or blind selfishness. Moreover, it is only by setting off down that road that we can work towards the just, secure and cooperative international order that we all wish to see.

The effects of the international financial crisis that began one year ago are spreading throughout most developed and less developed economies, and could affect the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. There is a risk that the poorest countries will end up suffering even more because of improper

practices in the richer countries. The financial crisis has conclusively demonstrated the need to reconsider economic environments that are immune to regulation and governmental supervision. We already know what speculation in the crucible of deregulation can lead to. Today, it is more important than ever to stress the role of institutions and Government in rationalizing the markets and their instrumentality in serving the real needs of families, the well-being of individuals and their education, health care and social cohesion.

At the national level, the State protects markets from their own excesses. The global market lacks similar institutions to develop control and supervision functions. We need to revise the rules and institutions of the world economy. We need a common vision for the establishment of a new international financial legal system. We have to learn from our mistakes, and do so quickly and in a spirit of cooperation.

My Government would like to contribute actively to forging that new international financial order. We will promote and support an agreement that contains definite commitments to supervision, transparency and early warning by national institutions; ensures the flexible capacity of those institutions to provide liquidity and countercyclical reserves of capital to the markets in moments of need; and strengthens the role of international financial bodies.

Prosperity for our peoples is possible only if there is international peace and security. Peace and security will be possible only through effective multilateralism based on respect for and the safeguarding of international law. For my country, there is no other way to imagine international order. Four years ago in this very same Hall, I proposed an alliance of civilizations with the objective of building bridges between different cultures and breaking down the walls of misunderstanding. Today, I am satisfied to note that the initiative promoted by Spain and Turkey has been fully endorsed by the United Nations, and enjoys the support of a Group of Friends made up of 90 States and international organizations.

The world can hope for peace only when dialogue and understanding of basic values that respect diversity are elevated above intolerance and fundamentalism.

Spain will continue to assert this conviction in all forums where our contribution is or can be relevant — including, first and foremost, at the United Nations. We will do so not only because it is the best way to stress the key desires of Spanish society, but also because we want to shoulder our responsibility for bringing about the just, secure, caring international order in which we believe.

The capacity for human progress cannot be questioned. The thirst for discovery and innovation, the desire to go beyond ourselves, opens the door for meeting human needs every day in all areas. It is a question of placing this immense creative force in the service of those values on which human dignity is based, eliminating arbitrariness, injustice and all forms of discrimination, starting with those that women have so unfairly endured throughout history. We cannot stop; we cannot give up.

In the United Nations, with a rational attitude, with the hope engendered by our common values, we can launch an era of world prosperity and unity. For that, we need coordination, not unilateral action. Development must be sustainable and not uncontrolled. We need permanent political dialogue. We should not give in to old temptations or new cold wars. We have to eradicate extreme poverty and denounce the selfishness of the richest. We need the United Nations. We need all men and women to know that their dignity is dependent on the dignity of their peers.

Above all, hundreds of millions of people in Africa, Latin America and Asia need us: that must be the basic purpose of our endeavours. Spain is committed to those endeavours and will fulfil its historic duty to eradicate extreme poverty around the world. This generation can do it; this generation must do it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Taro Aso, Prime Minister of Japan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Taro Aso, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Taro Aso, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Aso (Japan): It is my great honour to stand here as the new Japanese Prime Minister — brand new, really, as I was designated by the National Diet yesterday.

(*spoke in Japanese*)

First, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, former President of the General Assembly, for his devoted efforts during his tenure. I wish also to express my profound respect for the tireless leadership demonstrated by His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the management of the United Nations.

Being back in New York, I am reminded of an old saying about bankers. It seems that there are only two types of bankers in the world: bankers with short memories and bankers with no memories. In finance, market crazes and panics cling together in much the same way that shadows follow objects. Crazes invariably develop over time, which then give rise to panic. It was 10 years ago, in September indeed, that the world experienced a nightmare in which liquidity suddenly dried up. For more than the last quarter century, it seems almost as if crazes and panics have performed a never-ending musical rondo every few years, with a large number of countries and markets, naturally including Tokyo, as their stage.

Tokyo stayed relatively clear-headed during the most recent frenzy. However, that said, it could be argued that that was due to little more than the unusually long time we had suffered when our hangover morphed into a debt overhang as a result of the previous craze of the 1980s and 1990s.

That rondo continues without end, and so certainly humankind will once again hear that very same melody in the not-too-distant future. We simply must advance inch by inch each time and resolve to become more prudent. Vociferous arguments on the international financial architecture are about to begin once again. Japan is eager to contribute its experience and its knowledge.

In Japan, May is the month for enjoying new green growth, and 7 July is the day on which both children and adults tie strips of paper bearing handwritten wishes to bamboo branches hung from the eaves and look to the night sky as they pray for their dreams to come true.

This year in May, Japan held the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, also known as TICAD IV, bringing together some 3,000 participants in the port city of Yokohama. Representatives of 51 nations from Africa gathered, including 41 at the Head of State and Government level. Enthusiastically advocating action "Towards a Vibrant Africa", that Conference called for support to accelerate economic growth, to pursue the Millennium Development Goals in a sustainable manner and to foster health, water, sanitation and education in Africa on the basis of human security, a concept that Japan has carefully nurtured. Three thousand people renewed their determination to achieve those goals. The vibrancy of Japan's fresh green leaves certainly touched the heart of each participant.

Then, on 7 July, the day on which we pray for the realization of our dreams for the future, the Government of Japan moved the stage to Lake Toyako on our northern island of Hokkaido, opening the G-8 Summit and a series of outreach meetings. Again, Japan placed issues regarding development among the main themes, and we invited a large number of African participants. That was to ensure that the momentum generated by TICAD IV would be firmly maintained.

By making climate change the theme of another summit, we were able to agree to strive to adopt a global long-term target of reducing emissions and to seek to create, within the United Nations, an effective framework, in which all major economies would participate in a responsible way. That outcome of the Toyako summit should be regarded as no small matter. We aim to realize those goals by no later than the end of 2009.

I believe that we all associate efforts to address climate change with the name of Japan's ancient capital for 1,000 years, Kyoto. Japan has always felt some pride on that score. Japan leads the globe in requiring the least amount of energy to produce one unit of gross domestic product. Our technological creativity has helped to make that possible. We are eager for the world to make much greater use of it. The

sectoral approach also offers a channel through which Japan aims to contribute to many other countries.

Such was the G-8 achievement just over two months ago with Japan in the Chair. We are now witnessing irregularities in the global economy. It is my wish, and indeed, my belief, that the pledges of May and the dreams of July will be impervious to the strong and fast winds that now buffet them. There is an important precondition for both making a vibrant Africa even more vibrant and ending global environmental degradation through the efforts of all nations, namely, the stability of the global economy.

That being the case, the task ahead for Japan, as I see it, is already quite clear: it must first invigorate its own economy. In view of the size of the Japanese economy, the second largest in the world, that would certainly be the most immediately effective contribution that Japan can make. I will work determinedly to that end. Such is my pledge to the President and members of this Assembly.

I should now like to change topic and recount a small event that took place this past summer. It happened in a small town on the outskirts of Tokyo. Nine high-school students from abroad arrived there at the end of August, setting foot in Japan for their first time. There was nothing unusual about those very typical-looking high-school student visitors, grimacing at the unfamiliar food placed before them. However, there was one aspect in which those young men and women stood apart from participants in conventional invitation programmes. Those high-school students, four Palestinians and five Israelis, had all lost at least one relative as a result of terrorism or another aspect of the severe situation in the Middle East.

I have just described one of the ongoing efforts by Japanese civil society to promote reconciliation. Those high-school students may have no chance to interact with each other when they are back home, but for the several days that they are in a distant country, travelling here and there across the beautiful, verdant land of Japan in pairs comprising Israelis and Palestinians, something changes inside them. Those young people come to understand that religion and ethnicity make no difference when it comes to the sorrow felt at losing a parent, and they often shed tears upon coming to that realization. Through those tears of understanding they will come to see ties between their futures.

For comprehensive peace in the Middle East, what is necessary is the mental groundwork that will make such peace possible. By investing in the young minds of high-school students, Japanese civil society is working to foster that groundwork.

As that example suggests, there is no doubt in my mind that there are certain types of diplomacy that Japan is uniquely able to undertake. If Israeli drip irrigation technology were to be introduced in the West Bank of the Jordan River, Palestinian youth would be able to devote themselves to the production of vegetables. However, the wall of distrust that separates the two sides will not allow that in the immediate future. Here, Japan wishes to act as a catalyst, serving as a mediator between the two sides.

Japan is willing to bring its own technologies that maximize the potential of drip irrigation. In time, as a result of irrigation, the land of the West Bank will become fertile. The agricultural products grown there will be processed by Palestinians and transported through Jordan to be laid out fresh in stores in consumer regions around the Gulf. The Government of Japan aims to bring about such a future through its Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative. Here, Japan continues to provide its technologies and funding, but most of all, it aims to be a mediator, fostering trust. Needless to say, trust is the scarcest resource of all in the Middle East.

The Government of Japan is currently preparing to submit a draft resolution on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. I believe that there is no one who questions the wholehearted commitment of the Japanese people to that issue. In the same way, I believe it would be superfluous to elaborate on the fact that Japan values the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Japan has fielded Mr. Yukiya Amano, Ambassador to the International Organizations in Vienna and former Chairman of the Board of Governors of IAEA, as a candidate to be the next Director-General of IAEA. I strongly urge members to support his candidacy.

Just a moment ago, I touched briefly on the significance of 7 July for Japan. The Heads of State and Government and their spouses who gathered in Toyako for the G8 Summit wrote their wishes on bamboo leaves. While the words they chose varied, there was not a single person who did not include a wish for peace. Yet in the short space of time since

then, there have been incidents at various locations disturbing the peace, one after another.

First, regarding the situation in Georgia, I strongly expect to see a peaceful resolution of the issues, based on the principle of territorial integrity; with the parties involved, including Russia, acting in a responsible manner. And speaking of 7 July, that date conjures up abhorrent memories in the United Kingdom. We, here in this Assembly, have been newly incensed at the cruel terrorist attack that took place in Islamabad five days ago. It has also turned out to be difficult to find the path towards improving the situation in Afghanistan. There has been no change whatsoever in the fact that terrorism constitutes the greatest threat to peace and prosperity in the world.

I believe that the international community must continue to be engaged in tenacious efforts to combat terrorism. Japan has, from the start, been committed to reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan and we have maintained our refuelling activities in the Indian Ocean. I would like to state here that Japan will continue in the future to stand side by side with the international community and participate proactively in the fight against terrorism.

Among outstanding issues in the vicinity of Japan, it goes without saying that the most pressing are those concerning North Korea. North Korea has abducted Japanese citizens, including an innocent young girl named Megumi. Despite pledging to relaunch an investigation into the abduction victims, it has still not taken action towards fulfilling that pledge.

Regarding its commitment to abandon its nuclear programmes, it is widely known that recently there has been a conspicuous lack of progress. In parallel with the action that North Korea would take, I am prepared to take action towards the resolution of the outstanding issues of concern between Japan and North Korea and the settlement of the unfortunate past tensions between us, moving Japan-North Korea relations forward. What we are waiting for is action by North Korea. I will also continue to pursue the abandonment of North Korea's nuclear capabilities and its nuclear weapons within the framework of the Six-Party Talks.

That leads me to say that China and the Republic of Korea are each important partners for Japan and countries with which Japan must seek to increase mutual benefits and shared interests. Japan must promote multilayered cooperation with both of those countries as well as with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Together, we must enhance the peace and prosperity of the East Asian region and beyond — towards world peace and prosperity.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, I have only recently become Japan's Prime Minister. I was designated Prime Minister by the Diet and appointed by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan barely 24 hours ago, and this is my first engagement since assuming office. I hope that through my remarks thus far you can appreciate why I have taken such pains to join you here today. There are numerous points I wanted to raise.

Looking back, Japan has come a long way, with the Japan-United States alliance as a permanent cornerstone, while steadfastly enhancing relationships with neighbouring Asian nations. And I believe that the President of this Assembly and all the other dignitaries gathered in this Hall will, without exception, acknowledge that Japan attaches great importance to the United Nations and has never once veered from the path of international cooperation.

Even though they have suffered setbacks at times, the citizens of Japan, who have so vigorously pursued the building of the economy, have been guided by a single philosophy until the present day, that peace and happiness are most certainly within our grasp through the pursuit of economic prosperity and democracy. I am determined to work in solidarity with countries holding fundamental values in common and to share Japan's experiences with nations strongly needing such support. It is my unwavering view that this is a responsibility incumbent on Japan.

It is for these reasons that, speaking on behalf of the people of Japan, I must state and reiterate the absolute necessity of United Nations Security Council reform. We must bring about the early reform of the Security Council through an expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent memberships. Next month, new non-permanent members of the Council will be elected, and Japan is standing as a candidate.

Let me conclude my remarks today by expressing my sincere wish for the support of Member States for Japan's candidacy.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taro Aso, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to congratulate the President of the Assembly on his election to preside over the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and to wish him every success. We also wish to thank his predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his successful presidency of the Assembly during the previous session.

We should also like to express our appreciation for the important and outstanding role of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in support of the purposes and principles of the Charter of this Organization.

More than a year ago, the world witnessed the emergence of new international challenges and perils that hinder and disrupt efforts to achieve sustainable development in numerous countries, especially developing countries, and in particular the least developed among them. Most significant among those perils are the rise in the cost of food, basic commodities and energy, as well as climate change. The danger of those challenges lies in their global impact; their effects transcend national borders. No barrier or artificial restraint can withstand them. They will cause the international community to backslide significantly in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, we have begun to see the negative effects of those threats in the African continent, which has achieved no significant progress in the eradication of poverty and hunger or in the struggle against such dangerous infectious diseases as AIDS and malaria. Instead, these challenges have exacerbated the suffering of most African States.

Those challenges, alongside such dangers to security as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and human rights violations, pose a serious threat to international peace and security, and meeting them will require prompt, collective, united and firm action under the umbrella of the United Nations and its various agencies. We must also remain firmly committed to the agreements and conventions that we have signed and ratified, and implement transparently and honestly the resolutions we adopt in international meetings and conferences.

While the State of Kuwait supports the reforms that have been adopted in our international mechanisms, the ongoing changes in and transformation of the world order and the emergence of new problems and challenges call for continued reform and the restructuring of many United Nations bodies to accompany those changes and improve their performance. In that regard, we reiterate our demands for necessary improvements in the working methods of the Security Council, including greater transparency in its work and an expansion of its membership pursuant to standards and controls to ensure equity in its representation and efficiency in the performance of its duties and responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. Such reform must also take into consideration the legitimate demands of Arab and Islamic countries and the aspirations and interests of small States.

The State of Kuwait is pursuing its efforts to achieve economic and social development and to improve the living conditions of Kuwaiti citizens and alien residents. Kuwait has made good progress in implementing the commitments and resolutions of the 2005 World Summit. It has achieved all the Millennium Development Goals, including those on education and health, and advanced the role and empowerment of women in society. Furthermore, in carrying out the wishes of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, to transform Kuwait into a regional financial and business centre, the Kuwaiti Government has taken numerous important decisions and adopted new policies with a view to restructuring the national economy and consolidating trade and investment activities so as to provide an investment atmosphere

conducive to attracting national and foreign capital investment in such vital economic sectors as energy and infrastructure.

The State of Kuwait has spared no effort in continuing to provide development assistance to developing countries, particularly the least developed, through its official and non-official institutions. That consistent approach of Kuwait's foreign policy emanates from its conviction that strengthening the economies of the developing countries and helping them fulfil their development goals will be beneficial to all. It will broaden the horizons of partnership, cooperation and solidarity and consolidate the global economic and trading systems.

Since its establishment in 1961, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has provided grants and loans to finance infrastructure projects in developing countries. The gross total amount disbursed in grants and concessionary loans by the Fund since its establishment in 1961 is over $12 billion and has benefited more than 100 countries.

The State of Kuwait continues to meet its financial obligations to international financial institutions and specialized international agencies in a full and timely fashion. The Government of the State of Kuwait decided in December last year to allocate 10 per cent of all its contributions and donations to disaster-affected countries to specialized international organizations and agencies working in the field.

In response to the suffering of many developing countries in the difficult economic conditions resulting from the increase in food and energy prices, the State of Kuwait has established the Decent Life Fund, with a capital of $100 million, to develop and improve agricultural production in developing countries. Kuwait has also announced the donation of $150 million to the Fund, which was established at the most recent summit conference of the countries members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, held in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That donation was earmarked for research studies in the fields of energy, environment and climate change.

The State of Kuwait continues to follow a balanced oil policy that takes into consideration the interests of consuming and producing countries alike and seeks to maintain stable oil prices on the world market. However, the unjustified rise in prices, which is a source of concern, is caused by factors that are out of the control of the producing countries. They include speculation, additional taxes on fuel, and the failure to build new refineries and to upgrade existing ones. The ongoing impact of all of those factors has aggravated the economic crises and led to rising rates of inflation in the developing countries.

In that context, we express our deep concern over the financial crisis in the world markets. We welcome in that regard the bold steps and actions taken by the United States Government to address the mortgage crisis and to mitigate its negative effects not only on the United States economy, but also on the economies of other States around the world.

Achieving sustainable development in the Middle East will depend to a large extent on the ability of the countries of the region and the international community to address security issues and challenges that are a constant source of tension and instability. In our desire to achieve peace, we call on the international community now and in the future to help calm the hotbeds of tension and instability.

Any genuine and serious desire to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace must adhere to the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace, the road map adopted under Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) and the Arab peace initiative, leading to the attainment by the Palestinian people of all their legitimate political rights and the establishment of their independent State on their own land. We reaffirm our full support for the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic in recovering its occupied lands. We also express our support for the sisterly Republic of Lebanon as it pursues dialogue between all Lebanese parties in implementation of the agreement signed in Doha, capital of the sisterly State of Qatar.

The State of Kuwait welcomes the progress achieved by Iraq in combating terrorism. It commends the Iraqi Government's efforts and diligent endeavours, whose fruit include an obvious improvement in the security conditions in most Iraqi provinces. The State of Kuwait hopes that those endeavours will continue towards comprehensive national reconciliation and consensus leading to a democratic, free, secure and independent Iraq, living in peace with itself and its neighbours and respecting its international obligations and commitments.

For its part, Kuwait will spare no effort in supporting regional and international efforts to assist Iraq in facing its security, political and economic challenges, as well as its efforts to ensure its security, stability, political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in its political affairs.

In that context, the State of Kuwait hopes that contacts between the sisterly United Arab Emirates and the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran will continue at all levels in order to find a solution to the conflict over the occupied islands of the Emirates in accordance with the principles and rules of international law and the policy of good-neighbourly relations.

While the State of Kuwait stresses the right of all States to produce, develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it calls upon the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to dispel the fears and doubts about the nature of its nuclear programme. It also urges Iran to address all other outstanding issues.

We call on the international community to continue its efforts and endeavours to seek a peaceful solution that would spare our region from crises or wars that could undermine its security and stability, and to deal seriously and without favouritism with any country in the region not party to the NPT. That would pave the way for declaring the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction of all kinds.

All the peoples of the world yearn to live a free, decent life in a safe and stable world in which justice, equality and a clean environment free of conflict, diseases and catastrophes prevail. It is our collective responsibility to lay the foundations for a new partnership, based on fair and balanced rules of justice and equality, in which each party would assume its responsibilities and obligations to realize the aspirations and hopes of our peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Han Seung-soo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Han Seung-soo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Han Seung-soo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea and former President of the General Assembly, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Han Seung-soo (Korea): I would like to extend my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication to having the United Nations meet global challenges in a more effective and timely manner. I assure them of the Republic of Korea's full support for their noble endeavours.

As I stand here, I recall those turbulent days seven years ago when we stood shaken by the terrorist acts in the morning of 11 September 2001. Throughout my presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, all Member States were united in dealing with the grave challenges in the shadow of 9/11.

On 12 September 2001, this Assembly began its fifty-sixth session by adopting resolution 56/1, strongly condemning the terrorist acts and calling for a concerted effort by the international community to combat terrorism. With the close cooperation that followed, counter-terrorist capacity has been strengthened at all levels.

Nevertheless, as we are witnessing in many parts of the world today, terrorism continues to threaten and take the lives of innocent people. As the international community shares the concern over such an intractable trend, it is time for us to renew our commitment to completely root out terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea. The Republic of Korea was the first country to have the establishment of its Government recognized by the United Nations

through a General Assembly resolution, back in December 1948. Thanks to the Assembly's continuous support, the Republic of Korea was able to step into the twenty-first century as a full-fledged democracy and vibrant economy. It is my sincere hope that this special relationship will further develop and strengthen in the years to come.

Over the past six decades, the United Nations has strived for the common good of the international community and has become ever more relevant to the well-being of the present and future generations of humankind. It is currently leading the global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is demonstrating strong stewardship in addressing the global food and energy crises, as well as climate change.

Standing at the midpoint to the MDG target year of 2015, we realize that, in order to achieve what we pledged, all Member States will have to redouble their commitments to the MDGs. But political commitment alone is not enough. We need solid economic growth and a coherent strategy to translate our commitment into reality.

While the rapid growth experiences of Korea and other countries have served as a useful reference for many developing countries, we should move beyond the conventional economic growth approach of "grow first, clean up later". Rather, what we need is green and pro-poor growth.

Climate change, on which the future of humanity so critically depends, is now looming larger than ever as a global challenge. Adverse impacts of climate change are threatening the very foundation of the MDGs, inter alia, by affecting agriculture, upon which the livelihood of many in the developing world depends, and by increasing climate-related natural disasters, which are hitting hard the most vulnerable bottom billion, as in the case of Typhoon Nargis.

The conventional growth approach based on cheap fossil fuel is among the factors driving up the prices of oil and food. As such, we need a new climate-friendly strategy for energy and development if we are to attain the goals of the MDGs while addressing climate change. I encourage all agencies of the United Nations to closely cooperate to develop a new road map. In that regard, I would like to express my full support for the energetic leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been working hard to place climate change as our top priority on the global agenda.

The Republic of Korea recently embraced a low-carbon, green growth paradigm. We strongly believe that that is and should be the new paradigm for growth and development of the world in the future. We support the global vision of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2050 and plan to announce next year our voluntary midterm mitigation goal set for the year 2020. We will also launch the East Asia Climate Partnership, which will initiate programmes in the amount of $200 million over the next five years to support other countries in making their economic growth compatible with climate change concerns.

In 2002, I attended the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, in my capacity as President of the General Assembly. Through that and other experiences, I have come to firmly believe in the importance of high-level commitments to strengthening our efforts and political momentum on issues concerning the environment and development. In that vein, I would like to emphasize that a new world summit focusing on climate change and sustainable development needs to be held in 2012, not least to ensure a strong take-off for a post-2012 climate regime.

Given that the past three conferences were held in Europe, America and Africa respectively, it could well be Asia's turn to host the next. Asia is the most populous region in the world and is undergoing vibrant economic transformation, which makes the sustainable development issue all the more relevant. As a country well-placed to play a bridging role between developed and developing nations, the Republic of Korea hopes to make a contribution by hosting that conference.

The global food crisis is another factor contributing to instability by increasing the population affected by poverty and starvation. It is also threatening to reverse many of the gains we have achieved thus far in the development field. As the causes behind the current food crisis are complex and varied, our responses must be comprehensive as well as timely.

The Republic of Korea has provided humanitarian assistance to countries facing food crises. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Republic of Korea, in addition to its assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, has decided to offer

$100 million over the next three years for emergency food aid and for assistance to strengthen the agricultural capacities of developing countries. With first-hand knowledge in agricultural development, Korea plans to assist in various areas, including farming infrastructure, technology and policymaking.

This year also marks the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Over the decades, the United Nations has played an indispensable role in setting international norms and principles to ensure all human rights for all. This year saw further progress, with the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review by the Human Rights Council and with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities taking effect. At the same time, we need to redouble efforts to stem the serious human rights violations that still continue in certain regions. The Republic of Korea urges those human rights violators to urgently respond to the international community's call for dialogue and cooperation and to follow up with appropriate measures to enhance human rights.

In the area of United Nations reform, it is more crucial now than ever that the United Nations operate efficiently, effectively and responsively. The Republic of Korea supports all efforts, in particular the initiatives taken by the Secretary-General, to make the Secretariat more accountable, efficient and responsive.

As for the Security Council, in order for it to better fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security, it needs to be reformed to ensure that it is more representative, accountable and efficient. Moreover, considering the importance of the Security Council, every effort should be made to acquire a general agreement among all Member States in steering the direction of the reform. It should be not an issue of division, but one that unites Member States.

The new Government of the Republic of Korea has posited contributing to the international community as a trusted partner as one of the pillars of its foreign policy. To that end, we are strengthening our role in official development assistance and peacekeeping operations.

Since 2000, our official development assistance has increased three times in volume, with assistance to Africa increasing threefold in the past three years. We plan to triple our current official development assistance to reach over $3 billion by 2015. To better coordinate our development cooperation policy with the international community, the Republic of Korea plans to join the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2010.

The Republic of Korea is also seeking ways to strengthen its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Currently, we have a 350-strong contingent dispatched to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and are considering legislation to facilitate our participation in peacekeeping operations.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems poses a grave threat to international peace and security. We must strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In that regard, it is crucial that the North Korean nuclear issue be expeditiously resolved. That issue has remained for many years a threat to the security of North-East Asia while seriously undermining the very foundations of the NPT regime.

The Republic of Korea is making every effort to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, under which some progress has been made. However, Pyongyang's recent move to suspend the disablement measures and attempt to reverse the process is highly regrettable. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to resume disablement measures immediately so that the positive momentum generated by the Six-Party Talks process can be maintained and the denuclearization process can move forward.

With a view to developing more mature inter-Korean relations in a pragmatic and productive way, the Republic of Korea pursues a policy of mutual benefits and common prosperity. As progress is made in denuclearization, we stand ready to support economic development in the North. We are also willing to hold discussions with Pyongyang on how to implement properly all past inter-Korean agreements, including the Basic Agreement of 1992. President Lee Myung-bak, in his speech to the National Assembly in July, proposed to fully restore inter-Korean dialogue and emphasized that we are ready to render our cooperation to alleviate the food crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We look

forward to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accepting the offer for dialogue so that real progress can be made in inter-Korean relations.

Eventually, I believe that we will see more peace and prosperity in North-East Asia. The region is already a major powerhouse for economic growth in the world. With the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, countries in the region will be able to accelerate cooperation to make North-East Asia more stable and future-oriented. Undoubtedly, that will in turn contribute greatly to the peace and prosperity of the world.

Currently, the international community is grappling with the grave financial turmoil that threatens to spread worldwide. It has even been feared that the turmoil could lead to a recession of the magnitude of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Without a doubt, the current instability in the financial market could have a devastating, domino-like impact on the real economy of this globalized world.

We have to be careful, however, not to rush into protectionist policies either for fear of uncertainty or out of self-interest. There are hard-learned lessons from the Depression of the 1930s: the "beggar thy neighbour" policy and the policy of raising tariffs to protect particular industries harmed the world economy. Therefore, I strongly believe that any solution should be based on an even closer cooperation within the international community and the open market economy.

Today, the expectations placed upon the United Nations by the international community are higher than ever. However, what the United Nations can achieve cannot be greater than the sum of all our individual achievements unless there are synergistic effects. Therefore, all of us, each and every Member State, should not only do our best in carrying out our responsibilities, but should also be willing to help and reach out to others. Only by doing so can this global body live up to and even exceed the expectations of the international community. To that end, the Republic of Korea will faithfully do its part.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Han Seung-soo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam.

His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah (Brunei Darussalam): Please accept my expression of sincere appreciation to our outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, and my warmest congratulations to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Brunei Darussalam wishes him every success in the coming year and we offer him our full support.

My congratulations also go to the Government and people of Nicaragua. I offer them my very best wishes for peace, happiness and prosperity. That is a wish, of course, that we also offer all our fellow members. We very much enjoy working with them, sharing experiences, voicing concerns and hearing each other's thoughts and ideas. I say that because the coming year is a very special one for Brunei Darussalam. In September of next year, we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of our membership in the United Nations. We thank the Organization and fellow members for giving us the opportunity to play a part in a world we all share.

The global challenges we now face demand that every nation, big and small, work together. That is why we will offer whatever we can to support this world Organization. We will also support all its efforts to address political, economic and social concerns. We will help with recovery from natural disasters. We will join fellow Members in protecting not only the environment but also the cultures of small societies like our own. We will respect the values of the various faiths held by the people this Organization represents.

In more specific terms, that is why Brunei Darussalam strongly supports the role of the United

Nations in the Quartet working to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is why we ask the World Trade Organization to recognize the impact its work has on the stability of small, fragile societies. We ask its strong and influential members not to give up the search for a fair formula for an equitable world trading system acceptable to all nations.

That is also why we acknowledge the work of the Secretary-General with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to help our neighbour Myanmar recover from the terrible effects of Cyclone Nargis this year. It is the reason behind our work with our neighbours in Indonesia and Malaysia to conserve the priceless heritage of the Borneo rainforests by placing over half our territory under environmental protection in the heart of Borneo projects. It is why we affirm the right of all small nations and fragile societies, with all the values they uphold, to continue their way of life with security today and hope for the future. It is why we have supported worldwide dialogue between faiths to promote tolerance and respect for each other's deepest beliefs.

I offer this appreciation and support for a particular reason. A new generation of international leaders is slowly beginning to shape the future. It is my privilege here to speak not only on behalf of all our people, but especially on behalf of that new generation in our country. The twentieth century is, indeed, history. The twenty-first century is plainly here, creating its new set of internal and external dynamics. We clearly recognize that in my region. That is why ASEAN's leaders have signed a new charter. We and our fellow members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) have acknowledged that fact by amending the OIC charter and accepting the far-reaching objectives of the Makkah programme of action.

Underlying both those moves is the deep desire of leaders who are passing the baton to their successors to ensure that their people have hope and confidence in the future by being given the chance to join the twenty-first century. Our people must be able to participate to the fullest. The new generation of leaders must have the opportunity to help them do so. We have to provide that confidence; by that I mean the confidence that comes from education, modern training, health care and the knowledge that their culture, values and faith are safe.

If there is one broad lesson to be learned from the security crises that have marked the start of the century, it is that security is not an abstract concept, nor is it simply the traditional tasks of upholding the law and fighting crime. At its heart, it is a deeply felt feeling of unfairness. What we are asking for is the chance to address those causes at a very basic level.

In that task, we therefore turn to the United Nations for help. We deeply acknowledge the work of the United Nations agencies in the field and their expert staff and selfless volunteers. In particular, we thank the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). We see the success of both of these organizations as essential to providing our people with the confidence I have mentioned.

In Brunei Darussalam, we had the privilege of hosting our first UNESCO science and technology camp in 2006 and we have been deeply impressed by the agencies' relevance to the needs of ordinary people trying to meet the challenges of the modern world. We especially support the commitment of UNESCO to the process of dialogue and negotiation as the only lasting means of resolving confrontation, no matter how painstaking the process may be at times. In similar fashion, we have also long supported the invaluable work of WHO. We and our neighbours have greatly benefited from the exceptional international research, advice and technical assistance that this organization has constantly offered, and for which we are all most grateful.

I have briefly outlined Brunei Darussalam's support for the United Nations and its current objectives. Above all, we are committed to the work of its agencies as they attempt to help us all achieve the Millennium Development Goals. I have spoken of how a new generation of leaders can offer their people the hope that comes from confidence in the future. The United Nations is the organization that gives us a fair chance to deliver on this hope. That is all we ask, because for us the twenty-first century presents a difficult journey, and the United Nations is the compass that directs us towards a hopeful future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam for the statement he has just made.

His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Australia.

The Honourable Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Rudd (Australia): I would like to congratulate Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. The Australian delegation looks forward to working closely with him throughout the session.

We gather together at a time of great challenge to the international system — a challenge that reminds us afresh that we live in a world where our interdependence is now greater than at any time before, an interdependence that therefore demands our international cooperation now more than at any time before.

There are many who criticize the United Nations. And those of us who know this institution well know that it is not immune to criticism. But those who argue against this Organization advance no credible argument as to what should replace it. Whatever its imperfections, the United Nations represents a necessary democracy of States — States who resolved, out of the carnage of the last world war, that cooperation should always be preferred to conflict, that our national interests are invariably best served by the simultaneous prosecution of the international interest, and that the purposes of our common humanity should prevail over the narrow interests of the few.

When the nations of the world met in San Francisco in 1945, the United Nations was conceived as a bold experiment — one that ran contrary to the grain of the international order that had preceded it, where conflict was the norm and cooperation the exception; one in which the international community, for the first time, began to imagine how through an international institution we could not just protect the sovereignty of States, but equally advance the protection of peoples and the dignity of individuals.

Beyond that, we began to advance the idea that through the other great international institutions — the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) — we could fashion an international economic order that recognized the unfolding reality of economic interdependence.

These were the ideals we set for ourselves more than half a century ago. And while the history of our achievements since then has been mixed, the ideas and the ideals on which these institutions were constructed nonetheless remain as valid now as they were back then.

The failures that we have seen in recent times do not lie in the institutions alone. The failure lies more in the poverty of our political will to animate those institutions to discharge the purposes for which they were created. And that is our collective responsibility.

The global financial crisis of today presents us afresh with a critical opportunity to act comprehensively and collectively for the long term, rather than selectively and separately for the short. In the post-war period, the quantum of financial institutional failure seen these last weeks has been great. The quantum of government intervention in financial markets has been significant. The quantum of the impact by one market on another has been unprecedented. What we have seen in financial markets should bring home to us all that the central organizing principle of this twenty-first century is interdependence.

For the century just past, interdependence may have been one option among many. For the century that is to come, there is no longer an alternative. Interdependence is not the expression of sentimental idealism. Instead, it is a recognition of the new realism of our current times, which represents the cumulative impact of the globalization of our engagement with each other over many decades. Through unprecedented trade flows, unprecedented investment flows and unprecedented financial flows, we now see the globalization of our economy; the globalization of security, arising from the searing impact of 11 September when the obscenity visited on this great city caused us all to conclude that terrorism was the enemy of all civilized humanity, not just of some

nations; and the globalization of the environment, as we have come to recognize that carbon emissions from one part of the planet affect all parts of the planet and therefore radically affect the future of the planet itself.

What all these things tell us is this: interdependence is the new realism of this twenty-first century. And unless as a community of nations we rise to this new challenge, our future is bleak indeed.

The global financial crisis is a call to the global community to act. Financial markets are a public good. The stability of global financial markets is a public good. If Governments fail to protect this public good, then those who suffer are the working people of the world, whose jobs, whose homes and whose standard of living depend on it.

It is Governments rather than speculators that have the central responsibility for determining the rules that govern the way markets work. A decade ago, the global economy and global financial markets were buffeted by the Asian financial crisis, and as a global community we resolved that we would act to reduce the risk of such systemic crises in the future. The problem is, a decade on, that systemic lessons were not learned.

Now we face a financial crisis of truly global proportions. We must therefore ask ourselves three questions: What went wrong? What needs to be done now to fix the problem of financial market instability for the long term? And most critically, how do we marshal the political will to do so?

First, what went wrong? There has been a failure of internal governance within financial institutions. There has also been a failure of external oversight. Regulators have not always recognized the systemic risk posed by significant financial institutions.

So what must now be done?

The immediate task is to rebuild confidence in the financial system by ensuring that central banks provide adequate liquidity, by enabling the recapitalization of critical financial institutions and by ensuring their continued solvency. Over the longer term, the challenge is to reform financial markets and regulatory systems so as to reduce the chances of these events repeating themselves in the future. To this end, together with other States, we would argue that the following reform programme be implemented.

First, systemically important financial institutions should be licensed to operate in major economies only under the condition that they make full disclosure and analysis of balance sheet and off-balance sheet exposures. Systemically important financial institutions are not just commercial banks but can include investment banks, insurance companies, hedge funds and financial clearing houses.

Which institutions are systemically important will vary in a given country over time. The central bank in each country should have responsibility for the stability of the financial system. That should be embedded in globally agreed best-practice standards for financial regulation and should be assessed by the IMF.

Secondly, we need to ensure that banks and other financial institutions build up capital in good times as a buffer for bad times, using predictable rules. Supervisory frameworks need to be countercyclical, not pro-cyclical. The Basel rules need to address this.

Thirdly, financial institutions need to have a clear incentive to promote responsible behaviour rather than unrestrained greed. Regulators should set higher capital requirements for financial firms that have executive remuneration packages rewarding short-term returns or excessive risk taking. Again, the Basel rules need to address this.

Fourthly, supervisory systems must be compatible with accounting principles that reflect reasonable assessments of the value of assets over time. We need to make sure that accounting rules foster a more medium-term perspective and that they do not encourage institutions to believe that risk is low merely because current asset prices are high or recent asset-price volatility has been low. The Basel rules also need to address this.

Fifthly, the IMF should be given a strengthened mandate for prudential analysis. Conservative and consistent prudential standards should be applied to all financial institutions of systemic significance. Furthermore, the IMF and the Financial Stability Forum should develop early warning systems that signal impending institutional vulnerabilities and provide advice on remedial policies. Collectively, those institutions have led the development of the initiatives that represent the core of the financial-market reform agenda that I have just described. However, those institutions are, by their very nature, bureaucratic, and

the reform processes they initiate are constrained by a lack of political authority.

That brings me to the third question arising from the current crisis: how are we to go about implementing this reform agenda for the long term?

What is required is political will, exercised through ministerial forums working in cooperation with the IMF, the Financial Stability Forum and the Group of Twenty (G20). The G20 is well placed to provide the political authority to have such actions implemented urgently and comprehensively. In that context, Australia will work intensively with the forthcoming Chairs of the G20 — in particular the United Kingdom in 2009 — to ensure that financial stability is at the centre of the work programme and to initiate arrangements to strengthen G20 input into shaping the work of the IMF and the Financial Stability Forum and the implementation of agreed outcomes.

At their meeting in November, the G20 finance ministers should review the progress made in adopting the current Financial Stability Forum recommendations, reinforce the agreed deadlines for finalizing their implementation and agree with the Forum on a clear timetable for the action plan.

As countries with systemically important economies, G20 members should demonstrate their commitment to best-practice financial regulation and disclosure by providing better information regarding the stability of their domestic financial systems and cross-border exposures to the IMF and the Financial Stability Forum. The IMF and the Financial Stability Forum should provide regular scenario analysis to the G20 to facilitate clear engagement on the risks facing the global financial system. Such analysis should be included in an enhanced version of the IMF's Global Financial Stability Report.

The purpose of this reform agenda is to provide a real political mandate for our international regulatory institutions to do their job in defending the integrity of the international financial system.

One of the greatest challenges we face is climate change and the threat it poses to the environment. In December last year, after many years of delay, Australia ratified the Kyoto Protocol. We are determined to be part of the solution to climate change, not just a part of the problem. We have acted to begin the process of developing a comprehensive emissions trading or carbon pollution reduction scheme to bring down carbon dioxide emissions over time. We will also implement a national energy efficiency strategy as well as a renewable energy strategy. Developing and deploying new technologies will also be part of our response to climate change.

The Australian Government has decided to establish a global centre to drive the demonstration and commercialization of carbon capture and storage technologies. Building on existing national and regional initiatives, that project will bring together the best researchers in the world to develop the best technology to apply. As the world at present is planning to generate 45 per cent of its electricity from coal by 2030, we can no longer afford to delay acting on such technology. Australia invites all Governments and corporations of goodwill to participate in the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute.

The United Nations and we, its Member nations, have a responsibility to protect the nations and peoples of the world. We must protect people from terrorism, and that must include a commitment to support those nations on the front lines of the struggle. Australia is working closely with the Government of Afghanistan and with our global partners to bring security and stability to that country. We can never again allow it to become a haven for terrorists.

Australia is also an active contributor to global efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We continue to urge nations to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty so that it can enter into force.

We remain concerned that States such as Iran and North Korea continue to defy the international community and to fail to comply with demands for a full declaration and accounting of their nuclear programmes. Their actions are undermining the global consensus on containment of the spread of nuclear weapons.

This year, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) celebrates its fortieth anniversary. As a middle Power and a long-standing member of the NPT, Australia is committed to working with other nations towards the goal of the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons. Australia, together with our close friend and partner Japan, has established an International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament to create the political and policy

consensus necessary to elicit a real result on non-proliferation and disarmament in advance of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The United Nations own security machinery must also be effective. The Security Council needs reform. Australia supports expansion of its permanent membership to reflect changes in the world since 1945, and our nation will be a candidate for a non-permanent seat for the 2013-2014 term. Australia once again wishes to play its part in advancing the international security order.

Prosperity comes from economic growth. It comes from nations trading with one another. That is why it is so important that we conclude the Doha Round of world trade talks this year. It is why we must also implement the Millennium Development Goals, consistent with our solemn commitment in this place at the dawn of this millennium.

Progress in achieving the Goals has been mixed. We need to redouble our efforts to reduce poverty, to provide education for children and to ensure that people in the developing world have access to health care. Australia is committed to increasing its official development assistance to 0.5 per cent of its gross national income by 2015. Australia now resolves to do much more — much, much more — to make poverty history. It is unforgivable that poverty and conflict, such as those in Darfur, continue to claim the lives of innocents in the face of inaction by Governments.

Development is also about protecting human rights. Sixty years ago, this body adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We must commit afresh to protecting the rights that that charter identifies.

As nations, we should also commit afresh to righting past wrongs. In Australia, we began that recently with the first Australians, who have the oldest continuing culture in human history. This year, on behalf of the Australian Parliament, I offered an apology to Indigenous Australians for the wrongs that they had suffered in the past. That was the right thing for Australia to do.

Our membership in the United Nations is a key pillar of our foreign policy. Our priorities are regional, but our interests are global. We work with partners around the world to meet shared challenges. Through our membership in the United Nations, we are committed to using creative middle-Power diplomacy to help overcome the great challenges of our age — challenges that are beyond the power of individual nation-States to resolve, that can be overcome only through unprecedented cooperation between States. That is because the problems that we seek to solve in this Hall and through the organs of the United Nations touch every one of our peoples. To advance prosperity and stability at home, we must advance prosperity and stability around the globe.

Australia was one of the founding Members of the United Nations. Our Foreign Minister at the time, Herbert Evatt, made a significant contribution at the San Francisco Conference, particularly on the part of small and medium-sized countries. He ensured that the role of the General Assembly was protected in the structure of the Organization as a whole.

Sixty years ago this week, he was elected President of the General Assembly at its third session. Evatt was a patriotic Australian. Evatt was equally a passionate internationalist. Sixty years later, this institution, together with other international institutions of our current order, have yet to realize the vision of those who founded it. Yet the need today, in this age of unprecedented global interdependence, is greater than ever before.

And so it falls to this generation to now summon the political faith and to exercise the political will necessary to act for the common purposes of the planet we all share.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Australia for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Mr. Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Albert Pintat, Chief of the Government of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chief of the Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Albert Pintat, Chief of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Albert Pintat, Chief of

the Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Pintat (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): "I am committed to truth, not to what is established," said Gandhi. The Millennium Development Goals, which seek between now and 2015 to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce infant mortality, fight the spread of such diseases as HIV/AIDS and malaria, and guarantee environmental sustainability, are a challenge to us all, individually and collectively. Each human being is unique and respect for others must be both universal and imperative.

The world is paradoxical. We meet here during these weeks to speak of the food crisis and famine in the world, and we do so 63 years after having set in motion actions and structures within the framework of the United Nations to eradicate such phenomena.

In 2008, well into the twenty-first century, of the 2.5 billion poor people living in the countries of the South, 950 million live in conditions of extreme poverty. The forecasts of the International Fund for Agricultural Development indicate that, by 2025, the world will have 2 billion more people living in conditions of extreme poverty.

In one year, the world has been confronted, as it was in the last century, by mass movements of populations driven by hunger. The Governments of the wealthiest countries, international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) stand helpless before the worsening malnutrition and social tensions that have resulted.

The Secretary-General declared in his 2007 report on the Millennium Development Goals that the world does not want more promises. However, reality in its crudest aspect has put us through disturbances in recent months caused by people who are suffering famine in various countries. On Tuesday, the President reminded us in his opening speech of the perils of our current situation. We face a global financial crisis, a global energy crisis, a global food crisis and climate change. Faced with this situation, it is inevitable that we ask ourselves the questions: What did we do wrong? What is it that does not work?

The prices of basic food products have risen by 50 per cent in one year, and a group of United Nations experts has determined that the price of goods around the world has risen by 30 per cent since January 2008. If we take into account that there are 1.4 billion people living on less than $1.25 a day, there are far too many people living in the world today in extremely precarious conditions, with no access to schools, potable water or basic health care and hygiene.

Some experts say that the food crisis is the result of the failure of development policies that were adopted to encourage economic and social progress in countries classified as poor. Those countries often have substantial natural resources and could produce basic products, such as cereals, but reality is obstinate and the fact is that two thirds of developing countries are net importers of food products.

Alfred Sauvy, the economist and sociologist, said that the milestone of the economy is not labour but consumption. That is the source of one of the principal current problems. Consumer goods are scarce and demand exceeds supply. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Jacques Diouf, forecasts an increase of 56 per cent in the cost of imports of cereals for the more disadvantaged countries, but he also forecasts an increase of 53 per cent for the European countries.

The current crisis is closely related to the geographical distribution of productivity. Perhaps production should be increased in the places where people are suffering famine and less surplus sent from countries with more resources, since it contributes to increasing the dependency of the poor countries. In that respect, we agree with the decision of the World Bank to double its loans for agriculture to Africa, with a provision of $800 million for 2009.

At the same time and in order to correct the distortions that have been created in the markets, the liberalization of agricultural markets must be accompanied by measures of support for small local farmers so as to avoid the temptation of giving up production in favour of importing foreign food products. In fact, liberalization would have to be reinvented. Rather than serving as a common pattern for all countries, it would have to be applied according to the specific circumstances of each country, while the pros and cons are analysed with caution.

On the other hand, the subject of agricultural subsidies has not been resolved definitively, nor has true freedom of trade, which would serve to help the

countries that need it most, been established. Liberalization would also have to involve an increase in productivity and the development of human resources, basic infrastructures, access to technology and knowledge including respect for the environment. In other words, it would have to contribute to sustainable development, as indicated in the Doha Outcome Document of July 2008.

The current crisis shows the vulnerability of the present system. In that regard, without ignoring hard realities, Andorra fully shares the approaches agreed in Rome in June during the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. Since 2005, the Government of Andorra has worked on development cooperation with all of the major international bodies, vulnerable countries at their request, NGOs and civil society.

In the current context and in accordance with the call from world leaders, major international actors and international specialized and regional organizations, we have assisted the most affected countries through financial contributions to FAO and NGO initiatives. We also cooperate on support for agricultural trade and production in Burkina Faso, Colombia and Morocco through NGOs active in the field. For that reason, we endorse the future options being used to maintain biological diversity, sustainable forestry practices and the adaptation of new technology that can help to promote ecological balance and slow the effects of climate change.

Demographic growth on a planet that already has more than 6.7 billion inhabitants; chemical and industrial pollution; ill-adapted land use; desertification and water; the interaction of animal, vegetable and horticultural species; international trade and the movements of peoples are all destabilizing factors that are now upon us and very real. We have to address them with all the means available to us. Guaranteeing food for everyone on our planet is basic, essential and vital. Sixty-three years ago we thought that today, in the twenty-first century, this would be a fact, an outdated concept, a matter achieved, the success of our dreams. Sadly, we were wrong. Now, we need to be strong. To keep going and face up to the most pessimistic forecasts which warn us of the failure of the Millennium Development Goals.

We have made the diagnosis, we are aware that the policies we have encouraged in recent decades have not fulfilled our expectations. But we still have time to rectify this and for this reason I would like to congratulate both the Secretary-General for his initiatives and the rest of the international bodies and civil society for the specific actions they are implementing around the world.

Speeches, reports and fine words are necessary but we suffer from a serious inability to act. Let us not hide behind excuses. Let us take action based on the facts. The dignity of every human being obliges us to do so and humanity deserves it!

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chief of the Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Albert Pintat, Chief of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Stolfi (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of San Marino, I wish to congratulate Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann on his appointment as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Please rest assured that the Republic of San Marino is eager to offer all its support for the success of this session.

I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent work carried out during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly by the outgoing President, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, in particular for the commitment and determination he demonstrated while presiding over the Assembly and promoting the United Nations reform agenda.

I would also like to give special thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the great energy and dedication he has displayed in leading this Organization and, in particular, for his admirable commitment to the United Nations reform agenda and his continuing vigilance and determination in the face of emergencies and events of international political importance.

Furthermore, I would like to express San Marino's appreciation for the consideration the Secretary-General has shown to all United Nations Member States, without distinction, including small States, and for the attention he has paid to particularly delicate and urgent issues, such as climate change and the global food crisis.

The United Nations reform process is of fundamental importance to world equilibrium and must remain the focus of our efforts. We must not allow our failure to reach agreement on United Nations reform to lead to the decentralization and weakening of the Organization's pivotal role.

The key role played by the United Nations is of the essence in present international conditions, marked by wars and national conflict. In these early stages of the twenty-first century, we are witnessing a series of new conflicts ever more driven by economic interests and clashes of civilizations, both ethnic and religious, often within the same country.

More than 60 years ago, the signatory States of the Charter of the United Nations assumed the shared responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. They undertook to work together to prevent and remove threats to international security, to suppress acts of aggression and to resolve, through peaceful means, disputes within and between States that could lead to war.

On the sixtieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations peacekeeping bodies, it is important to remember the men and women who believe in those ideals, who have dedicated themselves to the people of the world, working tirelessly to promote peace and stability worldwide in dangerous war-torn zones with resolve, dedication and professionalism while always remaining impartial and neutral.

However, in spite of all their work, we are still far from attaining those goals and the United Nations has not had a full impact on many international crises. The reform of the United Nations in this context has thus become even more essential. Reform would enable the United Nations to have the necessary strength to act, fully respecting the ideals and objectives that it set itself at its founding.

The Republic of San Marino has always supported the United Nations reform process and, in particular, believes the process of the revitalization of the General Assembly to be fundamental. Those reforms are necessary to reaffirm the role of the General Assembly as the most representative body of the United Nations.

The Republic of San Marino believes that the strengthening of the General Assembly is of even greater significance for, as a profoundly democratic body of the United Nations, it currently represents the most important forum in which a small State can be heard and bring its own contribution at the international level.

Greater efficiency would make the General Assembly more complementary in its relations with the other main bodies of the United Nations, thus avoiding any duplication of activities and establishing mechanisms that would effectively implement the provisions of resolutions adopted by the Assembly.

The process of democratization within the bodies of the United Nations assumes fundamental importance for a small State such as the Republic of San Marino. Greater representation and democratization of the Organization's main bodies can guarantee States with small territories and populations the possibility of participating and having a larger role in the decision-making process within multilateral bodies.

I am convinced that smaller States like San Marino can contribute in a fundamental way to the Organization precisely because they do not have macroeconomic, military or geopolitical interests.

It is of parallel importance that small States establish efficient forms of collaboration and consultation in order to coordinate their actions so that

their voices can be adequately heard within international organizations.

In the framework of contacts with other small European States, which are frequently renewed, including on the occasion of our participation in the work of the General Assembly, San Marino has promoted a meeting with other small European States with which it is already collaborating on specific humanitarian projects, to consider other forms of multilateral collaboration.

Having participated with a group of small States in the financing of a UNICEF project for children affected by HIV in Gabon, this year the Republic of San Marino, in concert with the private sector, is taking part in other UNICEF projects aimed, in particular, at protecting the rights of disabled children.

Strong involvement in the protection of children's rights has characterized relations between San Marino and UNICEF for many years. That commitment was further expressed last December through the participation of Their Excellencies the Captains Regent at the commemorative plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children, an event that lent further impetus to the States' activities and underscored the need for their cooperation.

Population growth, climate change and the spread of new diseases, as well as economic and financial instability and armed conflicts, are seriously threatening the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In particular, the subject of climate change has become a priority in the United Nations agenda over the last two years because of its impact on our habits and the future needs of all countries without distinction. Those regions that are most vulnerable due to their geographic position, as well as developing countries, and small islands in particular, are facing an even graver emergency situation.

In addition, the global food crisis and rising prices present a trend that is increasingly distressing. The United Nations and the specialized agencies play a central role in confronting those emergencies. In particular, the Republic of San Marino would like to express its full support to the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, established by the Secretary-General last April with the precise objective of coordinating all ongoing activities aimed at stemming the crisis.

On the occasion of the opening of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Secretary-General announced the launch of the campaign "Unite to End Violence Against Women". San Marino intends to work in support of that campaign to protect the rights of women, which parallels a commitment undertaken during its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

I would like to add that the campaign to combat violence against women was also carried out at the national level, where we tried to raise public awareness of an issue too often ignored or underestimated. Following that initiative, the Parliament of San Marino recently adopted a new law: the Prevention and Repression of Violence against Women and of Gender-Based Violence. It is a decisive and innovative legal instrument for our country that provides for, inter alia, the introduction of preventive measures addressing violence against women and gender-based violence, as well as the protection of victims during criminal proceedings.

The Republic of San Marino also pays particular attention to the problems faced by persons with disabilities and the protection of their rights. San Marino has in fact already ratified the International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

The Republic of San Marino is pleased to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Republic of San Marino has always been committed to the promotion of the principles of peaceful coexistence and the mutual respect between individuals and peoples, in the knowledge that the understanding of others and mutual respect are the fundamental prerequisites of justice and peace. The promotion of intercultural dialogue is a concrete tool for attaining those values and for affirming one of the guiding principles of the United Nations: peace founded on justice and international cooperation.

San Marino is committed to and continues to work towards the promotion of intercultural dialogue, in particular in its religious dimension. At the regional

level, in the context of its activities in the Council of Europe, San Marino this year coordinated the Council's first meeting on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, which was held on an experimental basis. Representatives of member States of the Council of Europe, religious leaders, experts and representatives of civil society participated in the meeting. The development of dialogue among and with religions at all levels of society makes a fundamental contribution to preventing tensions which may endanger the peaceful coexistence of peoples, as stressed at the high-level meeting on that subject promoted by the United Nations.

In conclusion, I would like to wish the President great success in his important task and to assure him of our full support during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino for the statement just made.

Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Stoltenberg (Norway): Sixty years ago, in the fall of 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That international bill of rights contains a forceful reminder that force can and will be checked, and that the prime purpose of our work here is to keep the strong just and the weak secure.

We will celebrate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights later this fall, and we shall be guided by its wording in everything we do. The rights and opportunities of individuals, groups and countries are fundamental, and the United Nations is at the top of the system that oversees those superior rules.

When I come here every year, I am struck by the broad span of items that are discussed in the United Nations. We need to ask, are we focusing on the truly essential, most serious issues of our times? This year, we left on the table the unfinished business of the Doha Round of trade negotiations. The break-up of those talks has stalled our efforts to provide billions of people with increased economic opportunity. It is crucial that we restart this process.

We face a global food crisis. The Secretary-General has described the effect of that crisis on hundreds of millions of people who do not know if they will have enough to eat tomorrow.

Climate and energy are among the biggest issues of our time. They must be on the top of our agenda.

These big issues are also all about poverty, inequity and gender. Leadership is called for — leadership here at the United Nations.

I believe we face not only a food crisis, an energy crisis, a climate crisis, a trade-talk crisis, but a larger, decision-making crisis.

We have great institutional capacity. We discuss, we deliberate and we study, but we are too often unable to decide. Often, those countries that want the least are the countries that decide the most. Those that want the least amount of change and progress are able to slow us down and block decisions. Now also the Security Council seems to face difficulties after many good years.

All countries, all Member States share the responsibility for the functioning of the United Nations as a decision-making body that serves us, that is for people, that solves global problems and that allows all people to benefit from the rights with which they were born and which are written in the Declaration on Human Rights.

To become more effective, the United Nations must reform. The Secretary-General addressed this issue with strong conviction on Tuesday (5th meeting).

We should support him in that process. I am vesting hope in the ongoing deliberation on system-wide coherence. I co-chaired the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence, and I am heartened that more and more countries seem to be opting in on the "One UN" approach.

Some organizations, funds and programmes are making efficiency gains. They are truly exceptions. Still, Norway is committed to using the United Nations as the arena for our most important international policymaking activities. We allocate 0.98 per cent of our national income to official development aid. We are the seventh largest contributor to the United Nations in absolute terms. That is why we will be keeping a watchful eye on how the funds and programmes manage their resources and our contributions. We and other donor countries will have to require improved accountability, transparency and a results-based management system.

Reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is our foremost priority. We have assumed a special responsibility regarding MDG 4 on child mortality and MDG 5 on maternal health. We must all dedicate the next seven years to the bottom billion. Several leaders joined me today in presenting a report from the Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals. We also presented a plan for the next seven years — an exceptional plan that can allow us to save 10 million lives. If we succeed, we will build more sustainable societies, reduce conflict potential and provide a better basis for growth.

We are making progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty is being reduced. Child mortality is falling. But we have not made any progress at all with regard to maternal health. That is appalling. There can be only one reason for this awful situation, and that is a persistent neglect of women in a world dominated by men. Just think of all the millions of young girls and young women who know, and who fear and dread, that giving life may cause their own death. All this human tragedy is avoidable by simple means, but we have not taken the problem seriously.

Money does not seem to be a problem when the problem is money. Let us look for a moment at what is happening on Wall Street and in financial markets around the world. There, unsound investment threatens the homes and the jobs of the middle class. Something is fundamentally wrong when money seems to be abundant but funds for investment in people seem so short in supply. Market mechanisms will not fund schools in Afghanistan, hospitals in Rwanda, vaccines given in the slums and the ghettos. That kind of investment requires political will and decisions. And we must provide the framework that will direct resources towards those ends.

When Robert Kennedy was running for president 40 years ago, he said in a speech that a country's health cannot be measured simply by its economic output. That output, he said, "counts special locks for our doors and the jails for those who break them ... yet ... does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play". And still I would add that health, education and the joy of play form the capital that must grow and spread. Then, and only then, will we reach more equal levels of development and opportunity.

I have come here directly from a visit to the great rainforests of the Amazon, in Brazil, a country whose president is committed to lifting his people out of destitution. That has been President Lula's leitmotif throughout his political life.

Norway is a fortunate and developed country. From that follows a moral responsibility. We pursue wider development goals and seek to generate positive incentives for change and improve climate change policies.

Efforts against deforestation may give us the largest, quickest and cheapest reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. In the years leading up to 2015 Norway will contribute up to $1 billion to reduce deforestation in the Amazon. This contribution makes Norway the first contributor to the Amazon Fund. The size of Norway's contribution will depend on how successful Brazil will be in reducing deforestation.

In Bali last December, Norway announced a major initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Deforestation must be included in a new global agreement on climate change. Addressing climate change in a fashion that will stand the test of time and the scrutiny of future generations ultimately boils down to us versus the sand in the hourglass. It is a test of maturity for international cooperation.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about a fellow Nordic country. For the first time since

becoming a Member State of the United Nations in 1946 — after 62 years — Iceland is a candidate for the Security Council. Iceland's candidature reflects the long-standing commitment of all the Nordic countries to international peace and the vital work of the United Nations. Iceland enjoys the active support of its partners in the Nordic group: Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway. I urge members to take that into account.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Security and Immigration, Minister of Sustainable Development and Minister of Tourism, Sports and Culture of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Security and Immigration, Minister of Sustainable Development and Minister of Tourism, Sports and Culture of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Security and Immigration, Minister of Sustainable Development and Minister of Tourism, Sports and Culture of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Security and Immigration, Minister of Sustainable Development and Minister of Tourism, Sports and Culture of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I wish to begin by thanking His Excellency Srgjan Kerim for his leadership over the past year as President of this august and venerable body at its sixty-second session. I also wish to congratulate and extend best wishes to His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

Twenty-five years ago almost to the day, two Caribbean peoples who had always been separated by water but had long been united by history, culture and circumstance joined forces to embark upon a bold experiment. Having between them a land mass of just over 100 square miles and a population of approximately 50,000, the people of Saint Kitts and the people of Nevis decided to step forward as one nation to join the world community of sovereign States.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to be here to represent that nation at the United Nations, a potent symbol of freedom and sovereignty. That symbolism means all the more to my people at this particular time, as this sixty-third session of the General Assembly coincides with the celebration of my nation's twenty-fifth anniversary of political independence.

Building and reinforcing the pillars of nationhood has not been easy, but we have always considered it an essential task and a challenge worth facing. Therefore, as chief servant of my people and my cherished land, I stand before the Assembly today, emboldened by the pride of a nation that has taken its full and rightful place among the community of independent nations, a vibrant democracy with a thriving economy, a deep commitment to justice and human rights, and an abiding faith in social equity.

Mine is a pride that comes not only from realizing the benefits of the practical policies and programmes created over the years to improve the standard of living and uplift our people, but also from the sense of community, partnership and civic and personal responsibility that have shaped the destiny of my proud nation.

It is also the pride that comes from witnessing first-hand the true value of freedom — a freedom that has enabled us to share in the triumphs of democracy and to mould the creative genius and the industrious, enterprising spirit of our people into a single community of goodwill and commitment that moves our people and great country forward.

It is a pride borne of weathering storms of external economic shocks, including fluctuating commodity prices and the withdrawal of preferential market access, while being able to successfully

transform three centuries of a monocultural, sugar-based economy into a vibrant and competitive services-driven economy. Many other small States have not been as fortunate, however.

That is evident in our sister Caribbean nation of Haiti, where the devastating effects of four consecutive hurricanes in the space of one month continue to undermine the Government's effort to build strong institutions and to invest in the productive enterprises and infrastructure that generate employment and improved living conditions.

The progress witnessed in Saint Kitts and Nevis was not achieved by chance. Since the birth of our nation 25 years ago, we have faced a multitude of problems, some of which are fortunately behind us, but several others of which have emerged and grown in intensity and scope.

However, our experience in Saint Kitts and Nevis demonstrates that good governance and prudent management of one's resources; appropriate investment in people and systems; the protection people's freedom of association, religion and speech; the support and facilitation of a free and vibrant press; success at advancing the socio-economic well-being of one's people; and the upholding of democratic ideals are determined not by land mass, but by national character and political commitment. They are the result not of demographics or geographic size, but of long-standing sociocultural traditions. They are a function not of gross domestic product, but of an entrenched ethos of striving and determination. Our faith has steadied our resolve and belief in ourselves and our future. Of course, along the way, we have relied, understandably on such institutions as our beloved United Nations.

Through membership, Saint Kitts and Nevis has built important and strategic partnerships, stood shoulder to shoulder with other Member States to protect our individual rights and collective freedoms, and have fought battles far bigger than would be expected for a country of its size. We have also been witnesses to the positives and negatives, the strengths and failings of our world, but have soldiered on together in common cause.

That is why, 25 years later, I remain optimistic about the progress of the United Nations and its ability to defend the poor and needy despite the pull of competing powerful national agendas that have occasionally threatened to undermine the ethos of the institution and, indeed, the common good. From where I stand today, I have come to appreciate those achievements and to appreciate that, even at this juncture, providence affords us still new opportunities to renew our cherished institution.

It is very easy to side with the cynics when the Security Council becomes frozen in stalemate or when the need for action falls victim to political posturing. But history, particularly that of the past two decades, instructs me that the United Nations is far more than the sum of its weaknesses, because for millions of people around the world this Organization is their only hope, a bridge between life and death, a bastion of freedom and a beacon of hope.

It is my hope, therefore, that in this "Assembly of frankness" there will be a sober and unrelenting analysis of the human consequences of sweeping and globally enforced trade and economic regimes on small States all around the globe. And it is also my hope that the economic uncertainties now being experienced in some of the world's larger economies will sensitize us all to the breadth of the uncertainty, the depth of the anxiety and the real psychological trauma that often grip small States when policies that are formulated far beyond their shores and are utterly unresponsive to their entreaties are nonetheless thrust unflinchingly upon them.

Recent events have brought into focus the issue of the stability of the world's financial systems and financial institutions. The circumstances that have led to collapsing financial institutions and rising prices for food and energy were not created by small States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis. But yet again, as in the case of climate change, we are victims of the act of others, but with no resources whatsoever to combat the consequences.

Earlier this year, I participated in the High-level Conference on World Food Security, held in June in Rome. The upbeat response from several heads of State or Government and from the numerous ministers of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, water, energy and environment who participated in that meeting was, for me, a strong indication of the relevance and timeliness of the Conference for nations seeking to take positive action on the issue of food security.

The current trend continues to have a lopsided impact on the poor and on the increasing numbers of extremely poor and vulnerable people, who are those

least able to counter the impact of economic dislocations facing our countries. Mindful of our personal responsibility as leaders and of the heightened expectations of our citizens, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis has been taking practical measures to alleviate the suffering of our resilient people. We have addressed the important dimensions of availability and access to certain food staples such as rice, flour and sugar. We have looked at how best to stabilize prices to inject predictability into the system without prejudice to free market economics. We have also begun to rationalize and promote proper utilization of agricultural lands through land use diversion and diversification, providing financial and seedling support to farmers and recommending water rationalization and enhanced irrigation techniques.

The problems to which I have alluded are not unique to Saint Kitts and Nevis. Members will recall popular riots in some countries, including in Haiti, where they led to the resignation of that country's Government. That is evidence of just how the impact of the rising cost of food and the despair visited upon whole communities could easily undermine peoples' faith in their Governments to deliver on the promises of democracy, free market economics and globalization.

It was in January 2008 that the food price index established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) jumped by 47 per cent over the previous year. This included increases for cereals by some 62 per cent, dairy products by 69 per cent and vegetable oils by 85 per cent. In some instances, prices of staple foods such as maize, wheat, rice and beans have risen by more than 100 per cent. This global economic downturn, coupled with the dramatic upsurge in commodity prices, has created the worst food crisis in recent years.

This new phenomenon will make it much more difficult for us to address the growing incidence of poverty in and among our nations and our ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger throughout the world by 2015.

Against this backdrop, and given the need for urgent action, we also urge that the issue of reform, a recurrent United Nations theme for some 15 years, be revisited with renewed vigour and commitment. Far too much time has passed. Far too little has been done. And far too much now hangs in the balance. Let us equip the United Nations with the tools necessary to fulfil its mandates, especially in the areas of protecting individual freedoms and human rights and of promoting economic development as an integral element of human security around the world. For as Clarence Darrow said, "You can only protect your liberties in the world by protecting the other man's freedom. You can only be free if I am free".

The continuous suppression of freedom — overt or disguised — under the cloak of civil order or territorial integrity, must be tackled openly. Freedom and personal responsibility go hand in hand. How can we encourage people to take personal responsibility but deprive them of their personal freedom? That is the fundamental question.

Our presence here today is both a demonstration and an acknowledgement of the increasingly interconnected nature of our world. I wish to say that much of what Saint Kitts and Nevis has achieved over the past 25 years has been the result of our people's hard work and discipline, combined with the benefits that have accrued from both our multilateral and our bilateral relations. In that regard, the United Nations Development Programme has been a vibrant partner in advancing the programmatic goals of our twin-island federation, as have UNESCO and other United Nations agencies. Our relationship with this Organization is one that we cherish dearly.

We have worked with and through subregional entities such as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, regional mechanisms such as the Caribbean Community and hemispheric institutions such as the Organization of American States. Through regional mechanisms we have been able to map a course for functional cooperation on issues such as trade, security and health. Within the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS, we have developed a regional response to tackle the epidemic of HIV/AIDS. In the area of environmental protection, we continue to collaborate on and to work towards disaster reduction and mitigation. And we are assiduously exploring renewable energy sources, including geothermal energy, on which we have made encouraging progress.

On the issue of bilateral relations, I am pleased to say that we have built many deeply valued relationships over the years, and we continue to further strengthen those relations. In the light of that, we urge

that a way be found to facilitate the participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the specialized agencies of the United Nations. As world challenges have expanded, the Republic of China on Taiwan has stepped forward to provide technical assistance in the areas of social and agricultural development, as well as disaster relief in many countries, thus bringing enormous benefits to both public and private sectors.

Whatever the tone and tenor of the ongoing debate, climate change is an aspect of our modern experience. Because of our activities and our assault on Earth's atmosphere, many processes have negatively impacted rivers, lakes and oceans, resulting in fast-melting polar ice caps and rising sea levels and exposing us to greater risks of harmful solar radiation and greenhouse gas emissions. Wherever culpability may reside, those processes all have serious implications and consequences for small island States. In varying degrees and at various levels, those changes impact hundreds of thousands of small-scale farmers, fishermen and other people who depend heavily on the natural environment for their livelihood but are already witnessing lower crop yields and smaller catches.

It is no longer sufficient simply to lay blame at the feet of countries, businesses and people who pollute. We need effective strategies based on scientific consensus and, of course, solution-focused approaches that address such issues as the suitability of land for various types of crops, dedicated areas for livestock, pasture development, the marine environment, impact on health and health care, the productivity of forests and the increased incidence of pests and diseases, as well as implications for biodiversity and ecosystems. We must collaborate in addressing those effects, and we must take necessary corrective action in order to build a safer environment for ourselves and our future generations.

Our destinies and our freedoms are all interwoven. It was Franklin D. Roosevelt who said that "true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence". As Saint Kitts and Nevis commemorates its silver-jubilee year of independence, we therefore feel compelled to call on the United Nations and the members of the Security Council to work together to put an end to the genocide in parts of Africa. I also call on the United Nations to take firm action in the lead-up to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development so that that event will bring real relief and development, even to the far corners of Africa.

For much too long we have, perhaps unwittingly, separated human security from representative democracy and economic development from human rights. Those are inextricably linked. When we fight for the freedom of our brothers to vote but ignore their inalienable right to food security, that is a skewed principle; it is a half-measure based on a selective morality in which our fight will always be only partially won.

We cannot simply tell our citizens that they are free to vote, while failing to help them transform freedoms into practical systems that support and advance personal dreams. Democracy, I emphasize, is the best vehicle through which humankind can realize its dreams and aspirations. I firmly believe that true independence, like freedom, can come only from doing what is right.

And so I continue to believe in the United Nations, but beyond that, I have faith — an abiding faith — in the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis, whose confidence in themselves as a nation and whose commitment to the future have made possible the successes, positive growth and development that they have achieved, as well as the international partnerships that they have established, over the past 25 years.

Therefore, I say to the States Members of the United Nations: Let us commit to doing the right things. Let us continue the important work to reform and revitalize the United Nations. Let us tackle food security by recognizing that globalization was meant to improve our lives, not to worsen them. Globalization was meant to facilitate the free movement of goods and services, not to provide an opportunity for erecting artificial and unilateral barriers that punish poor and less competitive countries. Let us do the right thing about climate change. And together, one step at a time, let us do the right thing by using the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to address the fundamental development challenges facing developing countries in Africa and throughout the world. All that and far more is within the power and the capacity of a reordered United Nations and of Member States that are willing to take personal responsibility in that regard.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Security and Immigration, Minister of Sustainable Development and Minister of Tourism, Sports and Culture of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Security and Immigration, Minister of Sustainable Development and Minister of Tourism, Sports and Culture of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Balkenende (Netherlands): When the present session of the General Assembly began on Tuesday, the Secretary-General made important remarks about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the financial crisis. The world is witnessing extraordinary financial turbulence, and all parties must shoulder their responsibility.

At the same time, the current crisis should not distract us from the need to achieve the MDGs. What kind of world do we want to leave to our children and grandchildren? Any parent who considers that question for a moment will answer: a world in which my children are safe and can build decent lives, free from want; a world in which my children can reach their full potential without fear of repression or terror; a world in which my children are free and their rights are protected.

Everything that we do as the United Nations is about deep desires. There is a direct link between this United Nations building and the homes of hundreds of millions of families all over the world.

One man who forcefully reminded us that we are responsible for the opportunities open to future generations was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In early 1941, in the darkest hour of the Second World War, he gave us his vision of the future: the dawning of a world in which people would enjoy freedom of expression and belief and would be free from fear and want. After the war, those freedoms became our moral compass. They were set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by this very Assembly almost 60 years ago. Human rights remain the cornerstone of Dutch policy.

If we look around us today, we can see that reality falls far short of our ideal. We still live in a world where, each year, more than 9 million children die before they reach the age of five, and every day millions of people live in fear of violence and the abuse of power.

We cannot accept that. Together, the United Nations comprises a working community and our work is not done — not by a long way. Global challenges require global solutions. Global solutions require global action. Every one of us needs to ask ourselves: What am I doing to make freedom a reality for people at home and elsewhere?

What are we doing to bring about freedom from want? In the past 10 years, millions of people have managed to escape from poverty. In Asia and parts of Africa, a great deal of progress has been made, thanks to the efforts of many people. That progress should inspire hope as we continue to work towards the Millennium Development Goals. There is still so much to do. In some countries, the situation is actually getting worse, especially where health is concerned. One child still dies every three seconds, one mother every minute.

All Governments need to realize that good and ethical governance is an essential foundation for development, and realizing that, they must act accordingly. That also applies to the current financial crisis, where urgent action is needed. The financial sector and regulators should quickly implement the recommendations of the Financial Stability Forum: stricter supervision, better risk management, greater transparency and enhanced accountability. That is how to restore confidence in the financial markets and prevent future crises. The International Monetary Fund should play a central role in that process by further

stepping up its financial sector oversight. Together, we should re-establish the stability and integrity of the financial system.

Governments have a duty to provide food for their people. The international community will support all those who fight against hunger, want and disease, but we must do so as efficiently as possible. We must not waste resources; the need is too great. Above all, we must work together. We must work together with other Governments, certainly, but also with the business community and civil society. Public-private partnership works. I meet more and more entrepreneurs who are committed to the Millennium Development Goals and actively want to help. Let us grasp the hands they extend.

The Netherlands welcomes the initiative of Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann to place food security at the centre of this session of the General Assembly. Rising food prices hit the poor hardest. The position of small farmers is particularly important. If they are able to increase production, not only will their own families benefit, but the local community will too. That is why the Netherlands has earmarked extra funding for the development of agriculture in developing countries.

However, there can be no food without water. Water is the source of all life — 1.8 billion people currently have no proper access to clean drinking water, and their health, their very lives, are in the balance. So the Netherlands has joined with countries that believe that water is a human right, because access to water is an essential part of freedom from want.

What are we doing to ensure that second essential freedom — freedom from fear? Millions of people still live in the middle of conflict and violence. We must not accept that. Over the past 60 years, United Nations peace operations have played an important role in ending conflict. In many areas, the United Nations has ensured that dormant conflicts do not flare up again. So our efforts must continue, undiminished. Yet peace operations alone are not enough. The root cause of a conflict is often a political dispute, and it often requires a political solution.

There is no place in a free society for torture. There is no place for the death penalty. We all strive for a life without fear, yet there are people who face fear every day in order to defend human rights. To recognize those brave people, the Netherlands has introduced the Human Rights Defenders Tulip, a special honour that will be awarded annually on International Human Rights Day.

In our free world, no one is above the law and no one is beneath it. The Netherlands is proud to host the legal capital of the world in the city of The Hague. We will continue to strive for an International Criminal Court that is supported by all Member States. In a safe world, right is stronger than might. Crimes that outrage world opinion must always be punished. The International Criminal Court is there to support us in that task, and we must support the Court — all of us, openly and unconditionally. A wider acceptance of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice will also strengthen the international legal order.

We also need to speak about freedom of expression and belief. The debate on that issue often leads to misunderstandings, incomprehension and fears that national traditions may be swept aside. We can all be proud of our cultures and traditions, of the things that distinguish us from others. The challenge for every Government is to affirm its people's cultural and religious values and customs, and at the same time to build bridges with the rest of the world — bridges that enable people, organizations and religions to meet and draw closer. Finding the right balance is not easy, but it is essential.

Governments are there for everyone — for men and women; for people of all backgrounds and all religious convictions; for monks, priests, rabbis and imams; and equally for those who do not believe in a supreme being. Religion offers people comfort and inspiration in their personal lives. A religion is not a system of dogmas that may be imposed on others by force, and it is certainly not a justification for using violence when one feels aggrieved.

Everyone is free to profess his or her faith, to change religion or not to believe. We must all cherish and defend the freedom of religion or belief. The same goes for the freedom of people to express their views, and those freedoms go hand in hand.

We all know that there are countries in the world where those freedoms are violated, and to those countries I say: Respect the right of every person to freedom of religion and freedom of expression. They are universal rights. They are universal freedoms. At the same time, we must remind everyone who enjoys those freedoms of their responsibility — the

responsibility to show the same respect to others that we claim for ourselves.

We need the United Nations to ensure those four essential freedoms for which we stand, and the United Nations needs us. A strong United Nations is one in which universal values are central — a United Nations with a fair and balanced Human Rights Council, a United Nations that unites and delivers. When we began building the United Nations together, the number of countries worldwide in which people enjoyed a reasonable level of freedom was around 15 per cent of the total. Today, more than 60 per cent of countries can be called free.

In the same period, the number of people suffering from malnutrition has fallen by several hundred million. The number of armed conflicts is also declining, however serious the situation remains in certain troubled regions. Progress is possible, but it does not happen by itself. For the Netherlands, that is an incentive to continue working, heart and soul, for "a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want".

In conclusion, let me echo President Roosevelt's words: "The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.